

'Deplorable' diplomat identified by MP

Envoy criticised by ombudsman was earlier embroiled in Queen fiasco and Scott inquiry row

Richard Norton-Taylor

SIR David Gore-Booth, the Labour MP for the most controversial of diplomatic posts, was named yesterday as the ambassador whose conduct over a complaint about his consular staff was described as "wholly deplorable" in a damning report this week by the parliamentary ombudsman.

Sir David, now high commissioner to India and who was not identified in the report, was severely rebuked for writing to the chief executive of a British company — believed to be a large defence contractor — criticising the complainant, who was one of the firm's employees.

As a result of Sir David's action — described by the FO's legal adviser as "impetuous, ill-judged, and unwise" — the employee, who remains unidentified, was obliged to resign from the company.

The ombudsman, Michael

Buckley, is prevented from naming individuals mentioned in his reports. But yesterday, the Labour MP Andrew Mackinlay tabled two parliamentary questions, one asking Robin Cook to identify the ambassador concerned, the other asking why Sir David had decided to resign from the FO.

An FO spokesman refused to deny that Sir David was the man criticised by Mr Buckley. Sir David was ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time the letter was written. Mr Buckley said the company concerned was involved in a government-to-government contract. Though the company has not been named, British Aerospace has such a contract with Saudi Arabia — multi-million-pound Al Yamamah arms-for-food programme.

Sir David announced last summer that he had decided to leave the FO "to take on new challenges in the private sector". Earlier, he had been embroiled in the Queen's un-

happy visit to India, where Mr Cook was criticised after appearing to intervene in the Kashmir dispute. Sir David did not help matters by calling on the Indian government to sort out the "debilitating dispute" instead of "tilting at windmills".

Newspaper reports claimed Sir David had called Indian officials "incompetent bunglers" after the Queen had to abandon plans to give a speech in Madras.

Sir David, Eton and Oxford-educated and son of a former top FO diplomat, famously told the Scott inquiry that "of course, half a picture can be accurate". He also memorably described Iranians as people who "do not think logically".

He said that any change in the export guidelines for Iraq and Iran "would have upset somebody or other, which is one of the reasons for not announcing it".

Sir Richard Scott concluded in his report that if Sir David was concerned about ministers' misleading Parliament, "his written and oral evidence to the inquiry manages to conceal it... His evidence did not assist me in the least, as I am sure it could have done, to identify what had gone wrong in the operation of a system for which, as assistant under-secretary, he was responsible".

The then Mr Gore-Booth, who is to leave the FO at the end of the year, was subsequently knighted. Mr Buckley, in his report, castigates the FO for refusing to apologise for what he called the ambassador's indefensible action.

Mr Mackinlay said yesterday that Ombudsman's rules, preventing individuals from being identified, should be changed. "It is a classic case of lack of parliamentary scrutiny and is wholly unsatisfactory," he said.

There are many in the FO who, in this case, would agree.



Chirac attack on British refusal to surrender £2bn a year to EU embarrasses Blair

Budget rebate clash

Larry Ward in St Malo

AN UNEXPECTED attack by French president Jacques Chirac on Britain's refusal to surrender £2bn a year to the EU budget rebate, yesterday embarrassed Tony Blair and overshadowed a new spirit of Anglo-French co-operation proclaimed at the St Malo summit.

The clash forced Mr Blair to acknowledge that as the EU confronts a fast approaching deadline for fundamental reform of its financing, Britain is not prepared to budge on the rebate, worth a total of £2 billion since its introduction 14 years ago.

Mr Blair's determination to hold the line on the rebate, secured for Britain by Margaret Thatcher, provoked harsh suggestions from Mr Chirac that, without concessions from all member states, moves to prepare the financing of the European Union for enlargement would fail.

Mr Chirac's warning, which caught Mr Blair off guard, came as an otherwise productive summit had seen the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, come to the aid of his British counterpart to help diffuse continuing conflicts over taxation with assurances that harmonisation did not mean uniformity.

The conflict clouded the two-day summit which had seen a perceptible warming of relations between the two nations, culminating in the signing of an agreement on mutual defence co-operation on defence, together with accord over transport and to extend duty free shopping, due to end next June, for a further five years.

Downing Street was in a tempting last night to play down dissent over reform of EU funding, but underlined that Britain's rebate — worth about £2 billion a year — was "not up for grabs".



Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin in a friendly pose during the Anglo-French talks. PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE WOLZAR

Mr Blair, though enthusiastic over EU structural reform, has made clear that Britain is determined to retain its unique annual repayment. As the 15 EU states confront the implications of eastward enlargement, others argue that conditions in place when Mrs Thatcher wielded her magic at the Fontainebleau summit no longer apply.

Then, Blair lost out in relation to fellow members over farm subsidies, distributed under the Common Agri-

cultural Policy, Germany and the Netherlands, both now larger net contributors than Britain, resent its continued special treatment. Germany has made clear that it wants to resolve EU financing reforms — known as Agenda 2000 — by the end of its presidency next June.

Differences flaring at the summit yesterday did no more than reflect ongoing tensions around the EU, with both leaders speaking with domestic audiences in mind.

At a closing press conference, Mr Blair acknowledged that "a whole series of

things" would be up for discussion in preparation for enlargement, but said Britain's position on the rebate remained unchanged.

President Chirac responded: "If we start from the principle that everything that is mine is mine and everything that everybody else has is negotiable, then we are doomed to failure."

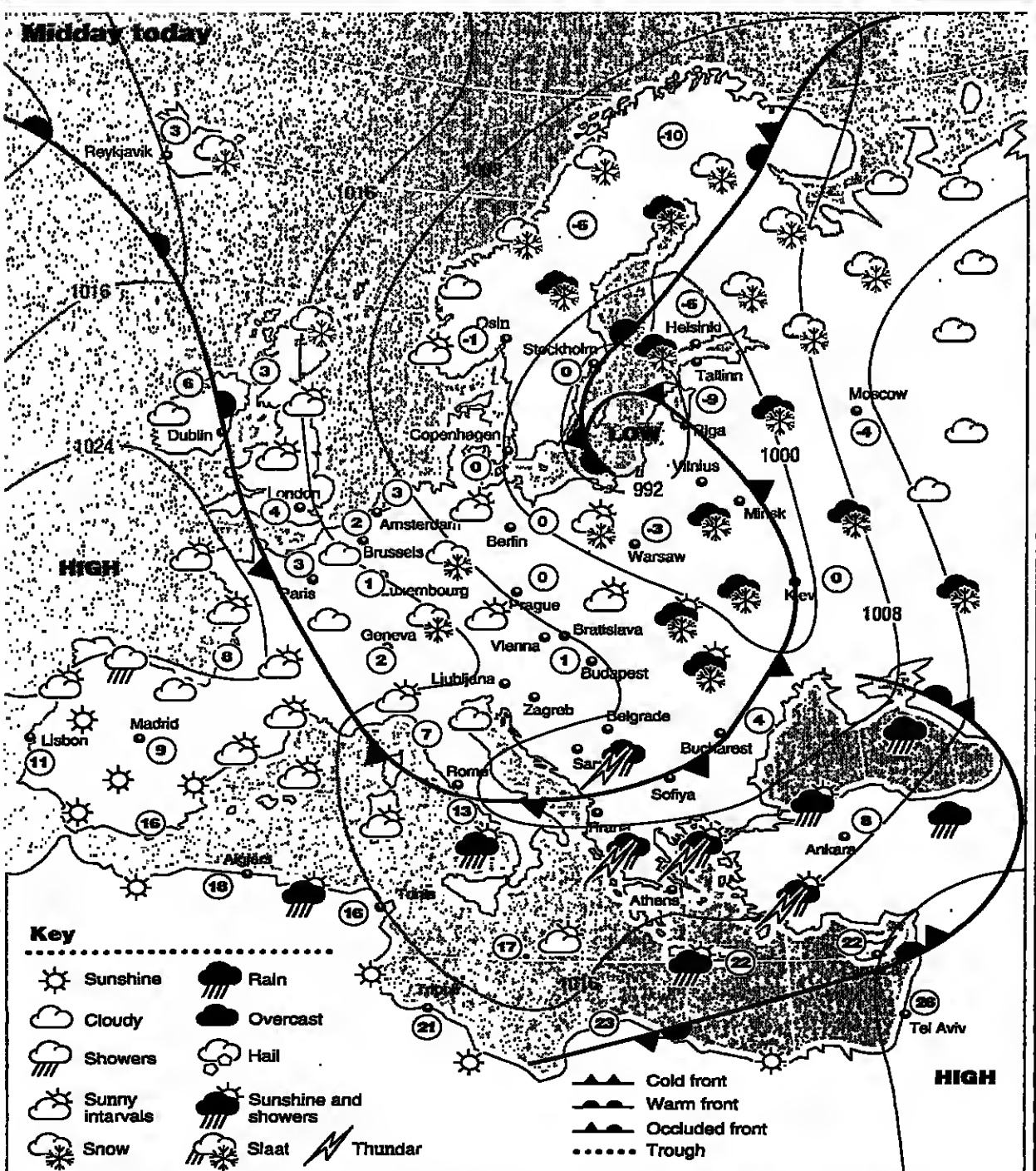
While each country had its own special interests, everything must be put on the table for discussion, he argued.

On tax, meanwhile, the French were ready to step in with timely support for Mr Blair after a rocky two weeks in which Britain has looked increasingly isolated from its EU partners over mooted reforms of taxation across the union.

Mr Jospin said: "Harmonisation does not mean uniformity. Nobody wants somebody else to choose for his country corporation tax or income tax."

Proposals for tax reform in Europe primarily meant reducing the number of tax havens and ironing out "distortions and competition where tax practices discriminate in one way or another".

The weather in Europe



Forecast for the cities

Today	max	min	weather	Tomorrow	max	min	weather
Algeria	16	5	Sh	Algeria	15	4	F
Amsterdam	10	4	Sh	Amsterdam	10	4	Sh
Antwerp	10	4	Sh	Antwerp	10	4	Sh
Berlin	10	4	Sh	Berlin	10	4	Sh
Bombay	28	18	Sh	Bombay	28	18	Sh
Buenos Aires	20	10	Sh	Buenos Aires	20	10	Sh
Calcutta	28	18	Sh	Calcutta	28	18	Sh
Cairo	20	10	Sh	Cairo	20	10	Sh
Cardiff	10	4	Sh	Cardiff	10	4	Sh
Chennai	28	18	Sh	Chennai	28	18	Sh
Copenhagen	10	4	Sh	Copenhagen	10	4	Sh
Dublin	10	4	Sh	Dublin	10	4	Sh
Edinburgh	10	4	Sh	Edinburgh	10	4	Sh
Geneva	10	4	Sh	Geneva	10	4	Sh
Helsinki	10	4	Sh	Helsinki	10	4	Sh
London	10	4	Sh	London	10	4	Sh
Madrid	10	4	Sh	Madrid	10	4	Sh
Moscow	10	4	Sh	Moscow	10	4	Sh
Nice	10	4	Sh	Nice	10	4	Sh
Paris	10	4	Sh	Paris	10	4	Sh
Rome	10	4	Sh	Rome	10	4	Sh
Stockholm	10	4	Sh	Stockholm	10	4	Sh
Toronto	10	4	Sh	Toronto	10	4	Sh
Tripoli	10	4	Sh	Tripoli	10	4	Sh
Warsaw	10	4	Sh	Warsaw	10	4	Sh
Zagreb	10	4	Sh	Zagreb	10	4	Sh

Around the world

Location	max	min	weather
Algeria	16	5	Sh
Amsterdam	10	4	Sh
Antwerp	10	4	Sh
Berlin	10	4	Sh
Bombay	28	18	Sh
Buenos Aires	20	10	Sh
Calcutta	28	18	Sh
Cairo	20	10	Sh
Cardiff	10	4	Sh
Chennai	28	18	Sh
Copenhagen	10	4	Sh
Dublin	10	4	Sh
Edinburgh	10	4	Sh
Geneva	10	4	Sh
Helsinki	10	4	Sh
London	10	4	Sh
Madrid	10	4	Sh
Moscow	10	4	Sh
Nice	10	4	Sh
Paris	10	4	Sh
Rome	10	4	Sh
Stockholm	10	4	Sh
Toronto	10	4	Sh
Tripoli	10	4	Sh
Warsaw	10	4	Sh
Zagreb	10	4	Sh

European weather outlook

Another cold day with snow flurries in the north and persistent snow across Finland and eastern Sweden. Denmark and southern parts of Norway will become largely free of dry with sunny spells. Highs will range from a very cold -10 in the north, but they will rise to about freezing across Denmark and southern Norway and Sweden.

Lower Central Europe, Germany, Austria, Switzerland

The northern coast of Germany will be windy with continuous falls of snow. Other areas will be mainly cloudy with a few light snow showers. It will be cold everywhere with temperatures remaining below freezing all day in eastern Germany. The Netherlands and Belgium will be slightly milder at -12 to -4C.

France

Much of the country will be cloudy and overcast. However, there may be some brighter spells on the west and south coasts. A few snow showers may affect eastern areas. Max temps of 10C in the north, but 10-12C along the Riviera.

Spain and Portugal

A much better day for the Costa Blanca and the Costa del Sol today after yesterday's downpours, with more in the way of sunshine for the whole region. The north coast may see a few light showers. Max temps 16C on the Costa del Sol.

Some showers will affect southern areas with one or two heavier downpours possible. Elsewhere, it will be drier with brighter spells. Max temps ranging from 15C in the south, but no higher than 6C in the Po valley.

It will remain very unsettled with heavy and thundery showers. Max temp 15-20C.

Television and radio — Saturday

BBC 1
8.00 News, 8.30 News, 8.55 News, 9.00 News, 9.15 News, 9.30 News, 9.45 News, 10.00 News, 10.15 News, 10.30 News, 10.45 News, 11.00 News, 11.15 News, 11.30 News, 11.45 News, 12.00 News, 12.15 News, 12.30 News, 12.45 News, 1.00 News, 1.15 News, 1.30 News, 1.45 News, 2.00 News, 2.15 News, 2.30 News, 2.45 News, 3.00 News, 3.15 News, 3.30 News, 3.45 News, 4.00 News, 4.15 News, 4.30 News, 4.45 News, 5.00 News, 5.15 News, 5.30 News, 5.45 News, 6.00 News, 6.15 News, 6.30 News, 6.45 News, 7.00 News, 7.15 News, 7.30 News, 7.45 News, 8.00 News, 8.15 News, 8.30 News, 8.45 News, 9.00 News, 9.15 News, 9.30 News, 9.45 News, 10.00 News, 10.15 News, 10.30 News, 10.45 News, 11.00 News, 11.15 News, 11.30 News, 11.45 News, 12.00 News, 12.15 News, 12.30 News, 12.45 News, 1.00 News, 1.15 News, 1.30 News, 1.45 News, 2.00 News, 2.15 News, 2.30 News, 2.45 News, 3.00 News, 3.15 News, 3.30 News, 3.45 News, 4.00 News, 4.15 News, 4.30 News, 4.45 News, 5.00 News, 5.15 News, 5.30 News, 5.45 News, 6.00 News, 6.15 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Nuptials by numbers... 13,000 'Moonies' take part in a mass wedding near Seoul in 1988 led by Sun Myung Moon, the Unification Church founder

Asia crisis hits waning Moon

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo on the collapse of the cult leader's South Korean business empire

AFTER overturning governments and ravaging industries, the Asian economic crisis now threatens to undermine one of the region's most prominent religious leaders: the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, head of the Unification Church. This week Mr Moon has seen his vast South Korean business empire collapse under a mountain of debt. It is the latest in a series of spectacular setbacks for the self-proclaimed messiah, who once boasted the adoration

of hundreds of thousands of believers around the world.

On Monday four companies in Mr Moon's Tong Il (Unification) Group filed for court protection after failing to keep up bank loan repayments. Analysts say the demise of the four — Tong Il Heavy Industries, Hankook Titanium, Il Song Construction and Il Shin Stone — will lead to the break up of the group, once one of South Korea's 30 biggest *chaebol* (family owned conglomerates).

The suddenness of the collapse was shocking, not least because it was sparked by the

failure of Tong Il Heavy Industries to make payments on a \$167,000 (£100,000) loan. But trouble has been brewing from some time. Like many other South Korean businesses, Tong Il has been hammered by a combination of slumping revenues and enormous debt burdens. At the end of last year the group's 17 companies had a combined debt of \$1.2 billion, 19 times their equity value.

It is a far cry from the heyday of Mr Moon's empire. In 1990 the Unification Church was said to have land holdings worth more than \$1 billion, as well as factories and a chain of small stores. Its assets overseas included shares in the influential US newspaper the Washington Times and car plants in China and Vietnam.

Behind its success was a vast pool of cheap labour. Believers — often referred to as "Moonies" — reportedly worked 12 hours a day for low wages, producing and packing items ranging from gin-seng to stone pagodas.

But the markets and loans dried up as Asia plunged into financial turmoil. In recession-hit Japan, consumers have less money to spend on religious trinkets. South Korean banks have also reined in credit since Seoul was forced to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a \$58 billion bail-out last December.

The difficulties facing the Tong Il Group have grown increasingly apparent since May, when one of its member firms — the Il Hwa soft drinks

maker — went out of business. This was followed by an embarrassing failure to win the right to develop a tourist resort in North Korea.

Mr Moon, who was born in North Korea, has gone to great lengths to build links with Pyongyang. In 1981 he struck a deal with the late North Korean leader, Kim Il-sung, to build a resort near Mount Kumgang. His plans to start package tours to the area ran aground this autumn as a result of financial concerns about Tong Il. The right to operate the service was awarded to Hyundai, South Korea's largest *chaebol*.

Throughout his life, the 78-year-old Mr Moon has bounced back from setbacks, including a 1982 conviction for tax evasion in the United

States and repeated allegations he is brainwashing his followers. But rebuilding his empire is likely to prove more difficult this time around.

The Unification Church is suffering a crisis of confidence after a string of scandals involving Mr Moon's children. As members of the "True Family", the siblings are supposed to set an example to other cultists, but there have been reports of lavish lifestyles and unruly behaviour. In a book published this autumn, the eldest of them, Hyo Jim, was denounced as a violent cocaine addict by his ex-wife.

For Mr Moon, who is focusing on South America in a bid to resurrect his fortunes, the combination of scandal and financial crisis may well prove insurmountable.

2p on tax fear over debts left for future

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

INCOME tax may have to rise by 2p in the pound to ensure future generations are not lumbered with an unfair share of the bill for the welfare state, says a report funded by the Treasury and Bank of England and published yesterday.

Unless prompt action is taken by the Government to bridge the gap between income and expenditure, the cumulative effect of the shortfall could mean that today's newborns end up paying 33 per cent more tax on average over their lifetime than the current generation, the report warns.

The figures come from Britain's first "generational accounts", drawn up by economists from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and Boston University.

Although compiled with the co-operation of senior Treasury officials, they represent the views of the authors alone. They show the older generation getting a much better deal from the Government than the young and are likely to intensify debate about the long-term sustainability of the public finances, already expected to come under pressure in the short term from slowing economic growth.

Generational accounts attempt to measure the burden that fiscal policies are likely to impose on future generations. They also identify the policy reforms needed to let future generations pay the same net lifetime tax rates as today's taxpayers.

Unveiling their groundbreaking study at a London conference, Roberto Cardarelli and James Seftoo of the National Institute, and Laurence Kotlikoff of Boston University, say that compared to other industrialised countries, the British generational imbalance is small.

But they argue that action is needed to prevent future generations honouring cheques being written by the Government today.

"This could take a variety of forms, such as the equivalent of either a \$5 billion increase in tax revenue or a \$5 billion reduction in government spending," says the report.

A \$5 billion tax increase in today's money is equal to 2p on the standard rate of income tax.

The authors admit their estimates may be wrong if they have made an unduly pessimistic assumption about the economy's productivity growth, which they estimate at 1.75 per cent a year during the past 10 years.

If productivity growth was a quarter percentage point faster, then no tax increase or spending cuts would be needed to achieve generational balance in the public finances.

Fiscal policy could also be left as it is if the Government displayed unprecedented restraint over future public spending increases, including keeping social security benefit increases in line with price rises and cutting the rate of growth of health spending per head of the population.

With health spending rising rapidly to keep up with medical and technical advances and an ageing population, a slower rate of increase in future health spending is considered unrealistic by many experts.

Leading academics, including John Hills of the London School of Economics, are also doubtful about the sustainability of policies that keep social security benefits rising in line with prices rather than incomes.

In a statement the Treasury said: "We recognise the importance of ensuring that fiscal policy is sustainable across generations. The Institute work provides a useful contribution to the debate on these issues."

War widow loses pension battle

Vivian Dodd

THE Department of Social Security was yesterday accused of lacking compassion after it won a court battle to strip a war widow of her pension.

A High Court judge decided "with regret" that Edith Allen, in her early 80s and ill in hospital, would lose the pension awarded to her by an appeals tribunal in 1996.

Her war-hero husband, Herbert, lost his leg fighting in France during the second world war and the tribunal decided his death from lung and prostate cancer could have been "hastened" by a heart condition brought on by his maiming.

Mrs Allen, of Paddock Wood, Kent, never received a penny of the pension worth at least £157 a week.

Ruling in favour of the challenge brought by the DSS, Mr Justice Allot said: "It is with regret that I have come to the conclusion that, whilst (Mr Allen's) heart condition could be said to be attributable to his service, there is no evidence that this condition hastened his death at all.

"Upon the evidence before me, I don't consider any tri-

bunal, properly directing itself, could do other than dismiss Mrs Allen's appeal."

Peter Knight, the widow's solicitor, said: "It is unfortunate that a more compassionate approach was not taken." The couple married two months before he went to war, and Mrs Allen had to cope with a wound her husband sustained.

Herbert Allen had his leg amputated below his right knee after being hit by shrapnel in May 1940. He was captured and held as a prisoner-of-war by the Germans who released him because he was unfit to fight.

Until the 1960s he needed several operations on the stump for infections, and was awarded a war pension for the amputation, osteoarthritis and lumbar strain.

John Aston, a Royal British Legion spokesman, said: "The DSS spent far more contesting this case than Mrs Allen could ever have received."

"Many people would see this decision as not taking into consideration the contribution war widows make, many who dedicated their own lives to looking after their husbands. They have saved the country an enormous amount of money."

Roller-coaster career of the reverend who won acclaim from the right

Martin Kettle in Washington

ONCE described by George Bush as a man of vision, Sun Myung Moon was a product of the 1970s. The 1990s have not been kind to him. Yet he remains a rich man who owns a bizarre collection of newspapers, magazines and cable television channels and an assortment of universities, golf courses and hotels.

The original Moonie moved to the United States in 1971, proclaiming that it was the world's most im-

portant spiritual battlefield. Within a few years he rented Yankee Stadium to hold a mass rally proclaiming that Satan had invaded America and that God had sent him to save its soul.

In the course of a roller-coaster career, Mr Moon attracted the admiration of an entourage of conservatives such as Ronald Reagan and Augusto Pinochet. Speakers at events organised by some of the dozens of Unification Church front organisations down the years have included the former prime minister Edward Heath and the columnist Paul Johnson.



Sun Myung Moon and his wife attend a Unification Church rally PHOTOGRAPH: KIM CHON-HIL

Mr Moon recruited tens of thousands of followers across the US and became famous for presiding over a series of mass weddings, culminating in a 1988 ceremony in Seoul's Olympic Stadium which entered the Guinness Book of Records when he united 6,516 couples. But his year-long jail sentence for tax evasion in the early 1980s brought bad

publicity. It also prompted the church leader to re-examine his relationship with the US. In 1994 he told a congressional inquiry that the US would "decide the destiny of the world". Today, the sermons of the ageing and increasingly frail Mr Moon are filled with apocalyptic visions of the US. "God hates the American atmo-

sphere," he said recently. "Satan created this kind of hell on the earth. It is heading for destruction in the very near future."

In a sermon last year, he condemned American women for practising "free sex just because they enjoy it" and denounced homosexuals as "dirty dung-eating dogs". Yet Mr Moon's US assets seem to be bearing up in

the face of the "satanic" onslaught. With the American economy continuing to resist the worst effects of the Asian crisis, his estimated \$500 million US empire continues to weather the storm. It boasts private schools, a New York recording studio and a conservative magazine called Insight.

The publication enjoyed brief notoriety this year when its editors invited Paula Jones to the White House press conference to discuss her lawsuit against President Clinton.

As Mr Moon's political and cultural influence has waned, members of his inner circle have criticised him publicly. In her book his daughter-in-law — one of hundreds of virgin "child-brides" selected by Mr Moon for his male followers — accused him of being a fraud and of protecting his son from a drugs investigation.

Mr Moon's latest obsession is the building of an airport in Jardim in western Brazil, to bring plane-loads of visitors to what he describes, with characteristic modesty, as "the new Garden of Eden".

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'The ground is clear and open to our cavalry,' said one jubilant minister

As more details emerge, Tory disarray over the Lords looks even worse. **Michael White** reports

A DEFYANT William Hague kept digging yesterday. Although he looked like a man in a deep political hole to most of Fleet Street, many peers and MPs, the young Conservative leader insisted he will sack any other colleague who behaves as Lord Cranborne did this week over Lords reform.

After six resignations from Tory ranks in the Lords over the 91-peer, backstairs compromise negotiated between Lord Cranborne and the Government, Hague loyalists yesterday battled to steady their party and rescue it from Labour's tactical ambush.

"The ground is clear and open to our cavalry," said one jubilant minister. Crossbench and Liberal Democrat peers also believe the offer to renege 91 hereditary peers, coupled with the Lords/ Commons Tory split, all but guarantees that the other 99 hereditaries will finally lose their votes in 1999.

It is now clear that Tony Blair and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, the key ministers involved in six weeks of highly secretive talks, were aware that Lord Cranborne might not be able to sell the deal to Mr

Hague. "The possibility that Cranborne might be dismissed was always on our minds," one insider conceded.

Incensed by the Cranborne-Blair deal, the Daily Telegraph, but not the Daily Mail, swung its weight behind the party leader yesterday. Lord "Tommy" Strathclyde, Lord Cranborne's lieutenant and successor as Leader in the Lords, did the same. But as more details seeped out about the deal, which broke down at Question Time on Wednesday, Tory disarray looked even worse.

It has now emerged that Lord Cranborne did not tell Mr Hague the full extent of his dealings with Labour, even when he was being sacked.

Mr Hague had earlier hauled Lord Cranborne into stalling last month's Euro-elections bill a fifth time, against his advice and Lords' conventions.

Senior Tory peers privately retaliated by urging Labour to send the bill back for a sixth round of "ping-pong" in the hope that enough of their own peers would have gone home to let Labour win.

John Smith discussed a similar compromise on Lords reform with the Tory "Mr Fixit", Lord Wakeham, when

he was Labour leader from 1992-94. However, a deal flourished earlier this year because of mistrust between Lord Cranborne and Lord Richard, the Labour leader in the Lords, who was sacked by Mr Blair in July.

More Tory peers would have quit the party if the cross-bench peers had not told them to stay put and fight for the pro-Cranborne line.

Mr Hague believes his rejection of any deal until stage two of a reformed Lords is agreed will be proved right. Labour's bad faith is proved by its haste to complete stage one, when it claims both stages could be implemented by 2001/2, Lord Strathclyde said in a statement.

"Reform should be done in one go," but Mr Blair simply wants an appointed "House of Crookes", both men insist.

In a speech in Cardiff last night, the Tory leader declared his intention to rebuild his shattered party "on the rock of principle", because it would only regain office when the British people once more trusted the Tories. "It wasn't easy," he said, to turn down Labour's offer on Lords reform with the Tory "Mr Fixit", Lord Wakeham, when

compromise.

"Some very senior colleagues of mine said I should sacrifice long-term principles for short-term convenience. But I refused because I wanted to be true to our principles. I wanted us to be the one party that stands against the Government's constitutional vandalism," he said.

Although MPs are backing him, and Mr Hague claimed a flood of public support, ministers and peers — many of them veteran Tory politicians — thought him naive in not embracing the scheme to let 91 of the 99 hereditary peers stay on until "stage two" reform is finalised.

"It was maladroitness in the extreme. The 91 could have had an influence on the composition of the reformed house. Hague could have said he had succeeded in rolling Tony Blair over and going back on his pledge to abolish the hereditaries," a Blair ally said yesterday.

Government tactics from here on are far from clear, most importantly over when the 91-peer amendment is added to the bill: either before it is published, in the Commons, or in the Lords. Ex-speaker Lord Weatherill would prefer MPs to do it, so that Hague's peers would then be forced to try and vote it down.

Wednesday's drama was a paradox. The outlines of a com-

promise had been actively debated by peers in private for months. But Lord Richard (now replaced by Baroness Jay) and Lord Cranborne engaged in such aggressive and leaky negotiations that they got nowhere last winter. Lord Irvine, an Inverness roofer's son, who is almost as confident as the aristocratic "Cranbo", did better.

Yet intense secrecy confined to a handful of people ("we were determined to defeat the leaks industry," said one insider) meant that few peers or MPs knew a deal had been done. Mr Hague broke the news in the Commons shortly after Lord Cranborne had tried to bounce him into accepting it without revealing all the strings attached, such as Labour's insistence that the Tories co-operate with passing the bill.

It also emerged yesterday that Lord Weatherill and his allies intended to unveil the plan as a suitable amendment from the cross-bench peers at 3 o'clock. But Mr Blair feared that news would reach the Commons so quickly that he would be put on the spot by a well-meaning MP at Question Time. So he asked if the news conference could be postponed until 3.15pm.

An angry Mr Hague asked the awkward question anyway. It was one of the sensations of the Blair era.



William Hague, flanked by former Welsh Office minister Rod Richards, being grilled by journalists at their party's Cardiff HQ yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF MORGAN

Ulster secrets author bailed

Richard Norton-Taylor

AN author and former journalist, known for his writing about Britain's special forces, has been arrested under the Official Secrets Act after the publication of a book on security and intelligence operations in Northern Ireland.

Tony Geraghty was arrested by six Ministry of Defence police early on Thursday at his home in

Herefordshire. A former Lt Colonel, Nigel Wydie, was arrested in Essex, Surrey.

It is the first time a journalist has been arrested under a section of the 1989 Act which enables the Government to prosecute journalists and authors for revealing confidential information.

In his book, *The Irish War*, published in October by HarperCollins, Mr Geraghty gives detailed descriptions of covert operations and surveillance by the security forces,



Tony Geraghty: arrested

including the SAS and MIRA. Mr Geraghty said last night: "I am surprised. I endeavoured to write about the Irish troubles in a long book about

a long campaign and what I call the British soft-war machine which the British people are entitled to know about."

The book describes the increasing use of computers by military intelligence to help identify targets, including the automatic photographing of vehicle registration plates by a system code-named Glutton. Mr Geraghty writes: "In Northern Ireland, where around 3,000 killers are thought to be at large among a population of 1.5 million, at least 1 million names are now on some security agency's computers."

Systems used by the intelligence agencies "provide total cover of a largely innocent population."

Mr Geraghty's house was

searched and he was held for five hours at Leominster police station. He was released on unconditional bail and ordered to appear at Hereford police station on January 22.

In a separate move, ministry police earlier this week raided the homes of two Gulf war veterans in search of documents which allegedly show the veterans had been tested for contamination by depleted uranium. Police said yesterday the documents were allegedly stolen from the Gulf veterans' illness unit at St Thomas' Hospital, London.

The National Gulf War Veterans and Families Association, said Ray Bristow's home in Hull and Andy Hone's home in Essex had been raided.

Helen McKendry holds a photograph of her mother Jean McConville, killed by the IRA 26 years ago. She had been branded a 'Brit lover' before her abduction. PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN LEWIS

IRA admits killing Belfast widow who 'disappeared'

The victim's daughter, told of her widowed mother's death in a secret meeting, pleads with the murderers to reveal where she is

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE IRA owned up to a 26-year-old woman when it admitted it had killed a 37-year-old Belfast widow and secretly buried her body, the victim's daughter revealed yesterday.

Helen McKendry, aged 40, called on those who had murdered Jean McConville, a mother who had 10 children, to take the next step and reveal where they had dumped her remains. She said that would be a big boost to the stalled peace process.

Mrs McKendry is one of the so-called disappeared. The IRA abducted, murdered and secretly buried at least 14 people during The Troubles, and the families have waged a long battle to have their bodies returned so that they can have proper funerals.

It is the first time the IRA has told any of the victims' families anything about what happened.

An IRA member told Mrs McKendry at a secret meeting recently that it killed her mother. But there was no explanation, and an internal investigation had failed to dis-

cover where she is buried.

Mrs McKendry, now a grandmother, said: "I was told that the IRA killed my mother back in 1972, but they are afraid to talk about what happened then. Maybe they are afraid they could be executed or whatever, so I think the IRA should put out a statement to let those people know they have nothing to fear."

The IRA man she spoke to said that he was trying to do everything to get her mother's body back. But she believed that ex-members of the IRA, worried about forensic tests on the body, were reluctant to come forward. She has her suspicions about the burial place.

Mrs McKendry was abducted just before Christmas 1972. The IRA was trying to find a woman suspected of helping two double agents, and had beaten her and 12 other women the previous night.

She was having a bath to soothe her wounds when eight masked men and four women burst into her home in the Divis flats, brandishing guns. Her 10 children never saw her again.

Mrs McKendry was born a

Protestant and had converted to her husband's Catholic faith. He was a soldier in the British army before the Troubles, and she was viewed with some suspicion in republican west Belfast.

It had been a terrible year. That January, her husband died of cancer.

Two months later, her eldest boy, Robert, aged 17, was interned in the Maze. Billy, aged six, lost a kidney, and Helen, 16, broke a leg during an army raid.

A few nights before her abduction, Mrs McKendry recovering from a nervous breakdown, had cradled a dying British soldier in her arms, saying a prayer for him. That night "Brit Lover" was daubed on the wall outside her flat.

Mrs McKendry, together with her husband, Seamus, aged 40, began to fight to find out what had happened. They formed the Families of the Disappeared in 1986, and were forced to leave their home in west Belfast after receiving death threats.

Mrs McKendry, terrified throughout the meeting with the IRA, said: "I kept thinking what my mother must have been going through that day. I was going of my own free will. But I kept remembering my kids' words as I left home that morning. They were afraid of history repeating itself."

She added: "How can I forget my past when I was never allowed to bury my mother?"

Inquiry on St John volunteers' sex abuse of boys

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

THE St John Ambulance last night launched an internal inquiry after three men were jailed for sexual abuse of cadets over a 22-year period.

The men, two of whom had been superintendents in the organisation, were said by the judge to have been involved in "a truly appalling story of sexual corruption of boys from 11 years onwards" in the Farnborough area of Hampshire.

Police uncovered more than 80 victims. Detectives went to Australia, Canada and the Falkland Islands to interview former cadets, mostly now in their 30s and 40s.

The abuse took place between 1964 and 1987. Since then, the St John Ambulance says it has implemented strict procedures to screen and monitor volunteers and has introduced child protection measures in collaboration with the NSPCC.

The inquiry will establish whether or not further improvements can be made. Almost two thirds of the 60,000-plus members of the volunteer ambulance organisation, which prides itself on its strong family links, are under 18.

Andrew Andrews, a senior volunteer overseeing child protection issues and leader of the inquiry, said: "Things have changed beyond all recognition in the past 10 years, but it would be foolish to say we are satisfied and there is

nothing we can learn."

The abuse ring, which came to light only when a victim came forward last year, was headed by Leslie Gaines, who joined the St John Ambulance at 11, spent 51 years in membership, and was superintendant in charge of the Farnborough division from 1964 to 1983.

Gaines, now 64 and from Bognor Regis, West Sussex, was jailed for seven years after admitting 11 charges of indecent assault, five charges of buggery and one of attempted buggery.

Colin Hawes, 51 and from Farnborough, became a cadet at 14 and succeeded Gaines as head of the division in 1983. He was jailed for two years after being found guilty on three charges of indecently assaulting boys.

Eric Atfield, 66 and from Alderhot, had been a lodger at Gaines' former flat. He was not a St John member. He was jailed for seven years after being convicted of two indecent assaults, one offence of buggery and two attempted buggeries.

He was cleared of one indecent assault and one buggery charge. Winchester crown court heard that cadets and other boys, some as young as nine, had been abused on camping trips and at Gaines' flat which had been turned into a "mini youth club".

Stewart Jones QC, prosecuting, quoted one victim as saying: "These events deeply affected my life. I can't understand what they have done to me."

Another said: "At the time,

Gaines told me if I told anyone about it, I would be taken to court."

Susan Matthews QC, for Gaines, said he had himself been abused as a child by a vicar. He had undergone a religious conversion in 1983 and had since committed no offences.

Judge Patrick Hooton told Gaines he was guilty of truly appalling sexual corruption. "They trusted you implicitly and that trust was grievously betrayed by you..."

Geoffrey Ford, 61 and from Farnborough, a former lover of Gaines, was sentenced to 100 hours' community service after admitting indecently assaulting one boy and attempted buggery of another. The offences, committed 40 years ago, came to light during the investigation.

Amelia Gentleman

THE BBC will be serving up a menu with a fair portion of recycled and reheated favourites for consumption this Christmas.

The corporation's programmers claim the festive schedule promises viewers the "biggest ever box of Christmas crackers", but much of the £49 million line-up appears to be less than sparky. Many of the programmes on offer are vaguely redolent of cold Brussels sprouts — depressingly familiar and somewhat past their prime.

The BBC hopes to win the Christmas Day ratings battle with two special editions of *EastEnders* — which see Bianca going into

labour and Grant and Tiff having another marital crisis. The soap is stacked alongside seasonal editions of *Changing Rooms* and *They Think It's All Over*.

While the film of the day is *Babe*, the story of the pig determined not to end up on the butcher's slab. Programmers hope to entice people away from the dinner table with the first of a three-part *Men Behaving Badly* special.

Boxing Day brings more seasonal disasters from accident and emergency as *Casualty* celebrates its 12th Christmas, and comedy veterans Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders are back for their first show together for three years. The long-running sitcom *Birds of a Feather* flutters

into view on Christmas Eve with probably the series' last episode.

The recent passion for fly-on-the-wall documentaries is also reflected in the schedule, with offerings from *Animal Hospital*, *Airport*, and the *Clampers* — which promises to reveal how traffic wardens get into the Christmas spirit. Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* returns yet again, this year as a musical drama.

There is a sprinkling of crisp new programmes, with the TV premiere of 14 new films — including, on New Year's Eve, the award-winning *Mrs Brown*, with Judi Dench and Billy Connolly, and *Tom Hanks in Apollo 13*. There's also the BBC's own *Twelfth Night*.

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PC murder suspect in furore at inquest

Will Woodward

THE prime suspect in the double killing of a policeman and a club doorman, sparked a furore at an inquest yesterday when he denied any role in the murders.

Richard Watts, who is serving 10 years for firearms offences, denied being part of a gang which shot dead community policeman Patrick Dunne and William Danso in Clapham, south London, on October 20, 1993.

The inquest into PC Dunne's killing heard that the officer, who joined the force after 15 years in teaching, had been on his way by bicycle to a separate domestic dispute when he happened on the gangland shooting of Mr Danso, a small-time drug dealer.

Det Con Gordon Holmes said PC Dunne, aged 44, was killed by one shot from a semi-automatic shotgun. His killers laughed and fired a shot into the air, apparently in salute, as they walked away from the dying men.

At the hearing at Southwark crown court, south London, Mr Danso's widow Deborah yelled at Watts to "tell the truth", and said he would "rot in hell". She then stormed out in tears, but returned to say to Watts: "I would like to ask you why did you do this, why?"

Watts replied: "I don't know what you're talking about."

Asked by coroner Selena Lynch if he shot the two men, he said: "No way, no way."

Watts, from Streatham, south London, was once arrested and charged with PC Dunne's murder. Gary Nelson and Anthony Francis were charged with conspiracy to murder.

PC Patrick Dunne, who was shot dead in a London street

murder Mr Danso. The charges were dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service because of insufficient evidence.

During the murder hunt, officers acting on an anonymous tip-off found the two guns used in the killings buried in Wandsworth cemetery, south London, nearly a year later. A fingerprint from Nelson's mother, Shirley Wright, was found on a bag in which they were wrapped. Mrs Wright claimed police collected the bag from her home and planted the guns.

Police said they remained confident of solving the case. They want to speak to two people against the anonymous tipster who told of the buried guns, and a witness believed to have known one of the killers and seen them leaving the street after the shootings.

Mr Danso was shot in the stomach in a hail of bullets, but managed to call emergency services before dying.

The inquest heard that Mr Danso, a 31-year-old father of three, may have been killed

Officers acting on an anonymous tip off found the two guns used in the killings buried in South London cemetery nearly a year later

for showing "disrespect" to a member of a gang during a row at a mobile phone shop.

The Disability Rights Commission will have an annual budget of £11 million — almost twice that of the Equal Opportunities Commission but below that of the Commission for Racial Equality.

The details came on publication of the Government's bill to set up the commission, which will replace the existing National Disability Council. While it will have functions "akin" to those of the other commissions, the new power of enforcing agreements will give it more flexibility.

It will be able to draw up a statutory agreement by which an employer or service provider will undertake to put right any breach of the law within a time limit.

In return, the commission will agree to stop any further

Disabled to get legal lever

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

THE body to be set up to police disabled people's rights will have power to force legally binding agreements on companies and others found in breach of anti-discrimination law, it emerged yesterday.

The Disability Rights Commission will have an annual budget of £11 million — almost twice that of the Equal Opportunities Commission but below that of the Commission for Racial Equality.

The details came on publication of the Government's bill to set up the commission, which will replace the existing National Disability Council. While it will have functions "akin" to those of the other commissions, the new power of enforcing agreements will give it more flexibility.

It will be able to draw up a statutory agreement by which an employer or service provider will undertake to put right any breach of the law within a time limit.

In return, the commission will agree to stop any further

investigation and enforcement action. Should the undertaking be broken, however, it will be able to ask a court to enforce it.

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Disabled People, said: "We are looking to develop and modernise the formal investigation process." She described the funding for the commission as "a flying start". It will have £3 million start-up money in 1999-2000 and £11 million in each of the two following years. By comparison, the EOC has a budget of less than £6 million and the CRE has one of £14 million.

However, disability groups doubted that the cash would be enough.

Brian Lamb, head of public affairs at Scope, the cerebral palsy charity, said: "We need kick-start funding: the Government's own surveys have shown that 90 per cent of small employers don't think the Disability Discrimination Act applies to them."

James Strachan, chief executive of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, said the bill was "great news" but that making the commission work "may well cost more than £11 million".

Animal rights hunger striker is now close to death

Will Woodward

AT the Barry Horne web site, there is a timer which ticks every second he stays on hunger strike. Today will be his 60th day without food.

He is said to be completely blind in his left eye, with vision blurred in his right, and deaf in his left ear. His liver is packing up, so much so that he has trouble keeping water down. Doctors at the York district hospital, to where he has been transferred from Full Sutton prison, have told him the damage to his eyes and liver is permanent, even if he gives up his fast.

The chances of that happening are more remote than ever, after a week which has seen an entrenching of positions on both sides, symbolised by grim threats by the Animal Rights Militia to assassinate 10 vivisection supporters — four of whom it has named — if Horne dies.

The Home Office is refusing to budge on Horne's demand that it set up the royal commission on vivisection promised by Labour before the general election. Some of those

involved talk darkly of a decision being taken at the highest levels of Government to not give in to Horne on principle. "We are in a position now where others outside the Home Office have said you are not going to concede to a demand from someone on hunger strike," said a source. "They could announce a royal commission if they felt it was the way forward, but Barry's hunger strike actually makes it less likely."

Just a few days earlier there had been hopes of a breakthrough. Eight days ago, Horne started drinking sugary tea and orange squash. The Home Office had announced the results of a review of the Animal Procedures Committee (APC), which advises the government on vivisection issues.

There were to be nine new appointments to the committee, including Mike Baker, chief executive of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (who, last week, joined the International Fund for Animal Welfare). The committee said it would be taking on "a more independent and pro-active role".

Horne thought letters from

Tony Clarke, his local, Northampton South MP, who has been mediating between the two sides, and another letter from St Albans MP Kerry Foland, plus a report on Channel 4's teletext service, indicated an investigation was underway into the suffering of animals under experimentation. But having been read the full APC review on Saturday, Horne decided he had been let down.

His supporters' web site stated: "The working party referred to will examine only genetic modification and cloning of animals, and is also proposing to take these figures out of the annual report that details the number of experiments conducted. In effect this is a negative rather than a positive development as far as Barry is concerned."

The APC decision may well have effectively condemned Horne to death. At midnight, last Sunday, he stopped taking the tea and orange squash. The confusion of the weekend has suggested there is an increasingly fraught atmosphere in Horne's camp. The Animals Betrayed Coalition, which is supporting Horne, insists that no one is

encouraging or discouraging him to continue. "We tell him the facts exactly as they are," said Tony Humphries, a friend from Northampton who visits regularly. Others, like Brendan McNally, who once served four years in jail for conspiracy to cause criminal damage, and Max Watson, are more gung-ho. Both have been banned from seeing Horne in hospital by the governor of Yorkshire's Full Sutton prison (where Horne is serving 18 years for arson offences). McNally was banned because he smuggled a film camera into the hospital. Now metal detectors are used on visitors to Horne in hospital. Horne is still visited by his girlfriend, Alison Lawson, from Coventry, and Nancy Phipps, the mother of Jill Phipps, an earlier martyr of the animal rights movement who was killed by a lorry trying to load weal calves at Coventry airport.

"Barry wants to be used to death, as in life, to fight for the animals," said a supporter. Now other lives are in danger from people acting in his name.

Catherine Bennett, page 9



The Guardian's Christmas appeal gives readers the opportunity to make a donation to up to eight charities. Today, **John Vidal** reports on the work of one, the Soil Association, which champions organic farming and researches agri-business

Organic farms bloom on health worries

DAVID and Jenny Baker own and run 400 acres of lush pasture on the Somerset Levels. They can just see Glastonbury Tor and on the far horizon the couple have a fine view of a way of farming that they think will benefit them and everyone.

They are in the process of converting from conventional to organic farming and next August their herd of cows should produce their first certified organic milk.

The decision to go organic was partly financial, partly out of concern for the environment and partly because, deep down, they say, they knew it would make sense to treat the land and their animals well.

Converting is a risk. They may lose money in the short term but, says David Baker, they are still young. Although it means farming more in the style of their grandfathers, they believe they are the modern, even future face of British farming.

David Baker says: "On one

level it means no more fertilisers or pesticides for the land or drugs for the cows. It means more weeds, lower yields and a heavier workload. It's harder, mentally, too.

"You've got to concentrate all the time, learn again about the soil and the land. You can't just put on fertilisers. It's a case of converting the mind, really. It's a philosophy about how you treat everything. It grows on you," says David Baker.

Not long ago, it was a lonely life being an organic farmer. Three years ago there were just 450 of them registered in Britain, says the Soil Association, which sets the standards for the industry and advises, researches and teaches what it believes are the benefits of organic farming.

The association has never been so stretched. A decade of food scares and a new awareness of the links between

health and environment, has meant their advice hotline has hardly stopped ringing. More than 6,000 farmers have contacted the organisation to ask for advice in the last 18 months, and more than half of these have taken the first steps to conversion.

November was another record month for enquiries and there are now 759 organic farms with twice as much land being farmed as three years ago. Within five years the association expects the numbers and acreage of its members to double.

The expansion of organic farming means that prices will come down and it will appeal to more than just a niche market, says Patrick Holden, the association's director. Switzerland, Austria and parts of Germany are already far further ahead, but Holden sees real change coming in Britain.

"Something very big is going on out there," he says. "In the past few years Britain's supermarkets have



The new farming fashion... weeding an organic carrot field by hand at Godmanstone in Dorset
PHOTOGRAPH: LUCIE PHELPS

rushed to bring in organic lines, 10 per cent of all baby food sold in Britain is now organic, production is soaring on the Continent and demand is far outstripping what Britain can supply. Even the water companies are beginning to pay farmers to convert in order to avoid cleaning up pesticides.

Consumer interest is high, say the big four supermarkets, and 25,000 copies of a Soil Association booklet on where to buy organic food have almost gone in a few months. Meanwhile direct delivery schemes of produce from organic farms to consumers in cities often have waiting lists.

Jennifer Jones, of Leicester, says: "Many people say they are buying organic food not for themselves, but for their children. Until the price comes down we just give it to our young children. You can see they are healthier, but it's hard to say if that's because of the organic diet they are on."

Mr Holden thinks the public now understands that you cannot have healthy people without healthy food and a healthy environment, and that the high output, cheap food policies of successive governments are beginning to

make a mockery of government exhortations to "sustainability".

All the food scares of the past decade, he says, have happened because farmers and their suppliers have been encouraged by governments and powerful industries to take short cuts.

Mass production of animals or crops did not count the cost of 100,000 food poisoning cases a year, low quality food, salmonella, E-coli, BSE, cleaning up pesticides from water, and soil loss. BSE alone had cost Britain more than £4.5 billion.

One of the most attractive areas of organic farming for the Government, which is wrestling with rural decline, is that it employs between 30 and 70 per cent more people than conventional farming. It will play a part in the new rural White Paper, expected by next summer, says the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher.

Mr Holden says: "We have devised a method of farming that is anti-animal and anti-people. It encourages disease, both in crops, people and animals, says Holden. Here we have a real alternative. Health should be the birthright of everyone."

The charity

□ The Soil Association has championed organic farming in Britain since 1946 and researches the impact that modern, industrial agriculture has on the health of humans and animals and on the environment.

□ It has recently turned its attentions to campaigning against genetically modified food and the use of antibiotics in intensive farming.

□ Campaigners believe intensive farming is not compatible with healthy farming and want to change the rules on which modern agriculture is based. They aim to increase the area of land managed organically by 50 per cent year on year, which will help to minimise pollution caused by agriculture, protect plant and wildlife habitats and maintain the genetic diversity of our countryside.

□ The association needs money to continue its research programme and campaigning. "Our health and that of our children depends on the health of the land from which we grow our food," a spokesman said. "By supporting the Soil Association readers will be helping to protect the environment and to build a truly sustainable future for everyone."

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Powder keg of a film



In a new film, Ana Sofrenovic and Lazar Ristovski play Serbs caught in a cycle of violence that has parallels with the country's recent past

Belgrade's streets grow meaner

Chris Bird in Belgrade

AT THE start of a new Serbian film, Bure Baruta (Powder Keg), a taxi driver tells a guestworker returning to Belgrade: "Fuck this city. What did you come back for?" The film, set on the mean streets of the Yugoslav capital, is a chain of frightening and angry incidents — and a forest of expletives — where tense Belgraders are caught in a seemingly unbreakable cycle of violence.

Last night at its London premiere at the Old Vic, it was awarded the 1998 European Critics Award.

The director, Goran Paskaljevic, was a student of the Prague film school in the 1980s and was taught by the director Milos Forman and the novelist Milan Kundera.

The film's fast and brutal pace is unnervingly close to reality. Sitting in the back of a Mercedes taxi myself recently, I was told by its driver, Goran: "Ha! You've

come to live here when everyone else wants to leave? They offered you a choice of prison or going to Belgrade, right?" Goran, a Serb in his early thirties, was prematurely grey. He was wounded in fighting near the Croatian town of Vukovar in 1991. A bullet remained lodged millimeters from his heart.

Like most of Belgrade's 2 million people, he was fed up with the once-vibrant city's visible decline.

"Belgrade is a good city, with good people, but it's [Yugoslavia's] President Slobodan Milosevic who's ruined it for us," he said.

The daily Politika newspaper, usually steadfastly loyal to Mr Milosevic, recently ran photographs of collapsing buildings and potholed roads in Belgrade.

Last month a 50-year-old woman was killed when she fell into a ditch where a water pipe was being repaired.

Falling debris and the crash of parked cars on the pavements prompted Politika

to conclude: "The safest way to walk Belgrade's streets is to walk on the white lines in the middle of the street."

The state-owned transport system is a slow and inefficient symbol of the nominally socialist country's decay. Each clanking tram and battered bus is a potentially explosive "powder keg".

In the film, Sergej Trifunovic plays a disaffected young war veteran stuck on a bus who flies into a rage while waiting for the driver to finish his coffee in a nearby cafe.

"Everybody's drinking coffee," he shouts at the other passengers. "My whole world is passing away while everyone is drinking coffee."

He jumps into the driver's seat, speeds off, crashes and then terrorises the other passengers with a flick-knife.

A film-maker and critic, Dinko Tucakovic, who runs the Kinoteka film institute, said that under Tito film directors "tried to look at the people on the margins of society. This is very similar to

what's happening now. The Milosevic regime says everyone is happy, but on the street it's something entirely different."

The film's violence is a metaphor for the Balkans' bloody history, where the inability to forget past grievances feeds violent anger, starting the cycle all over again, Mr Tucakovic said.

The former Yugoslavia's wars are represented in the film elliptically: there are catches of newscasts from Kosovo, the coffee-drinking bus driver is a refugee from Bosnia, and a series of exploding cars echo wartime bombardments.

Powder Keg has been compared to Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, although it is a comparison dismissed by Ana Sofrenovic, the 26-year-old actress who plays the widow of a soldier.

"Tarantino has an ironic take on violence, whereas here it is something more tragic," she said. "When there is so much violence,

you feel weak and powerless to defend yourself, so you spill out your frustrations on someone who is close to you."

In the film Sofrenovic is accosted on a train by a drunken man, played by a Lazar Ristovski, after a violent fight with his best friend.

Sofrenovic, who finds herself in the path of the man's orgy of destruction, reaches into a kitbag containing the belongings of her dead husband and pulls out a grenade to protect herself. Ristovski takes the grenade from her and pulls the pin.

The actress, who has a Serbian father and a British mother, takes a detached view of the events that have rocked her country.

"People are not that violent here, whatever they think outside Serbia," she said. "I think it's like a vicious circle and nobody knows who started it."

"And the film says it's not important who started it — what is important is who are those continuing it."

Pacific Catholics challenge ban on wedded priests

John Hooper in Rome

VATICAN officials are debating how to react to the latest, unusually authoritative, call for change in the Catholic Church — an end to the ban on married priests.

A meeting in Rome of senior prelates from the Pacific has heard repeated appeals for the ban to be lifted. The idea is anathema to the Pope, even though an exception has long been made for some parts of the Church.

Priests of the Uniate denominations — communities in eastern Europe and the Middle East which recognise papal supremacy but keep their own liturgy — are allowed wives and families.

The reordination in Britain of priests who left the Church of England in protest at the ordination of women has created a further anomaly.

The Catholic Media Office in London said that although no record had been kept, about 30 of the most recent entrants to the Roman Catholic priesthood were thought to be married.

The latest challenge to Vatican orthodoxy has arisen at a synod of high-ranking clerics from Oceania, which takes in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Their meeting is due to end next Saturday.

In the most tactful of language, three of the synod's six working groups have appealed to the Pope to rethink his ideas on married priests. One called for a "deeper examination of the criteria for

not having married men ordained as priests". Another proposed that in certain situations a "special dispensation could be considered".

Perhaps anticipating trouble, the hierarchy introduced new curbs on the synod. For the first time, speakers have been told they cannot distribute the texts of their speeches to the press.

Since Vatican synods are held behind closed doors, the only information allowed to reach the media is in the form of summarised addresses.

Celibacy has been the single most important reason for large numbers leaving holy orders

These have nevertheless provided ample evidence of dissatisfaction with the ban on ordaining married men.

The Pacific, a region of isolated communities separated by vast distances, is acutely in need of more priests. One of the speakers told the synod that his diocese covered an area of 2 million sq km.

Another, Bishop Guy Chevillon of the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia, said much of the area comprised "small Catholic communities [islands, villages or regions] which are used to living without a priest."

"The most they can expect is to have a brief visit by a priest every three or four

months, or even perhaps once a year".

Like several other speakers, he stressed that this deprived worshippers of access to communion. Bishop Ambrose Klipsch of Papua New Guinea talked of the "gradual spiritual starvation" of Catholics in his area.

In a veiled allusion to the issue of priestly celibacy, a third working group concluded: "We need to dialogue about how to ensure that the Lord's Supper is more available to our people."

The issue burst to the surface in the very week that the Pope, at his regular Wednesday audience, emphasised the importance of communion. He called it the "apex of Christian life".

The celibacy rule has been the single most important reason for large numbers of priests leaving holy orders in recent decades.

But conservatives and progressives continue to debate whether scrapping the rule would, in fact, increase the number of ordinations. Some believe that the shortage is only temporary.

The Archbishop of Perth, Australia, Barry Hickey, told the synod he believed "we are already witnessing the turnaround".

Others made it quite clear that they disagreed. Patrick Moroney, regional head of a missionary order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, said: "It would be a great grace if, as a consequence of this synod, another look could be taken at the situation of ordaining committed married men to the priesthood."

Clergy already match and hatch

AMONG those who took up the issue of celibacy at the Oceania synod was a bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Australia, Peter Stasiuk. But he did so from a very particular standpoint, writes John Hooper.

Lamenting the various factors which stood in the way of unity among Catholics, he cited "the Holy See's prohibition of the ordination of married deacons to the priesthood in the West".

For, unknown to many, there are millions of Catholics for whom it is entirely natural for the parish priest to have a wife and children.

They belong to the so-called Uniate churches. These recognise the Pope as their spiritual leader, but retain the liturgy and practices of other rites.

Most broke away from the Orthodox church. The Ukrainian Catholic Church alone claims 5 million members.

Under Uniate rules, priests cannot marry, but married men can be ordained. Priests who wish to become bishops must remain celibate; celibacy is still viewed as an ideal.

Indeed, several leading figures in the Uniate churches have urged Rome

not to give up its rule on celibacy.

In a letter to Pope Pius XI, written 70 years ago, Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky of the Ukrainian church, said no bishop "anxious for the spiritual good of his flock could desire anything better than a good celibate clergy".

There is nevertheless nothing in Roman Catholic dogma preventing a married clergy. Priestly celibacy is a tradition, not a doctrine, and it was not until 1139 that the Lateran Council declared the marriages of priests to be invalid in the eyes of God.

Indian Christians demand end to Hindu persecution

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

TENS of thousands of Christians held a day of protest yesterday against what Indian Church leaders called the most concerted campaign of persecution in the 50 years since the country became independent.

In New Delhi, Church leaders gathered in the chill of the early morning to fast and pray by the banks of the Yamuna river, at the spot where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated 50 years ago.

They said the authorities and police had failed to protect their community — 23 million people among India's multitudes — from attacks by Hindu extremist groups allied to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

"We demand the government does its duty," said the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Delhi, Alan de Lastic.

"When it fails we will act as its conscience. This is why we are here: to fight injustice against the Christian community and all communities."

It was the first concerted protest by Indian Christians against more than 80 violent acts committed against them since the Hindu nationalist BJP won power at the federal level in March.

Church leaders said theirs was not the only community to feel vulnerable, however.

"We resent the attacks on all minorities in India," Mr de Lastic said. "It is destroying our ancient spiritual, cultural and moral heritage. It goes against the Indian ethos."

Virtually all the outrages are attributed to allies of the BJP, especially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), which preaches an even more extreme and narrow view of Indian culture.

Although Christianity arrived in India almost 2,000 years ago, the VHP continues to regard it as an alien faith.

Many of the attacks, which have included the gang rape of nuns, the destruction of churches, the burning of bibles, and rampages through Christian schoolyards, were carried out on the pretext that the churches were converting Hindus by deceit.

The United Christian Forum for Human Rights says there



Thousands of Christians came into central Delhi yesterday to pray and demand protection

has been more violence against the community this year than in all the years since independence.

Yesterday's protest underlined the community's new sense of vulnerability.

At a rally in Parliament Street, central Delhi, religious leaders pleaded with a gathering of about 4,000 seated protesters to remain silent, sanctioning only the occasional "amen".

As the docile crowd settled down for street plays, Mr de Lastic led a delegation to parliament to ask the BJP-led coalition to condemn the religious violence.

It returned bearing promises of action. Delegates said the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had told them: "I share the agony of the Christian community. Only lunatics can indulge in such activities."

"I am prepared to do all I can to put an end to this."

Mr Vajpayee's response was not echoed by the government of Gujarat, the scene of more than half the attacks against Christians.

Its chief minister threatened to cut grant aid to Christian schools which closed for the protest, and deduct a day's pay from striking civil servants.

The federal government, too, has seemed unmoved by the Christians' fears. Last month, the home secretary, B. P. Singh, summoned foreign journalists and complained about their reporting of the attacks, which he said were isolated criminal acts unrelated to religion.

But even he admitted that

there had been 33 attacks on Christians during the first 10 months of the year: a 50 per cent increase on last year.

"What is happening in the last one year is symptomatic of a deep cultural shift in the minds of the people, especially in rural areas," said Shailesh Mark of the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

"Nationalism has been converted into a kind of idol worship — a kind of monolithic, monochromatic credo."

Yesterday the Christians did not stand alone. Muslim and Hindu leaders addressed the crowd, and a Buddhist monk.

"It is not the Christians or the Muslims who are a minority in the country," said Arif Mohammed Khan, an MP from a Delhi party. "It is this lunatic fringe in the Hindu society which is a minority."

Some Church leaders say the violence is not simply the product of the VHP and other groups' belief that they can act with impunity, but has deeper roots.

"They argue that traditional societies in remote areas feel threatened by the Churches' presence, and their efforts to educate the most downtrodden of Indians: the Dalits, formerly known as untouchables, and the Adivasis, the indigenous peoples."

"If we think conversion is the issue, we are mistaken," Father Walker Fernandes said. "Power is the issue. The VHP and others talking of conversion are the money-lenders and the merchants who have been keeping the Dalits and the Adivasis down."

Extremists fire up film-maker

Director says film must go on, despite attacks on cinemas, writes Suzanne Goldenberg

DEEPA MERTHA, the director, said yesterday she was shocked at the attack by Hindu extremists on a cinema screening Fire, her film about a love affair between two Indian sisters-in-law.

Nobody ever thought it could happen in Delhi," Ms Mehta said.

Fire, now showing in London's West End, has been playing to full houses across India for a month, belying earlier fears that the middle classes would be horrified by the love scenes between the two main women characters.

But on Thursday, about a dozen activists of the Hindu extremist Shiv Sena attacked a matinee screening at central Delhi's Regal cinema, smashing the glass display cases and ripping off posters of the film.

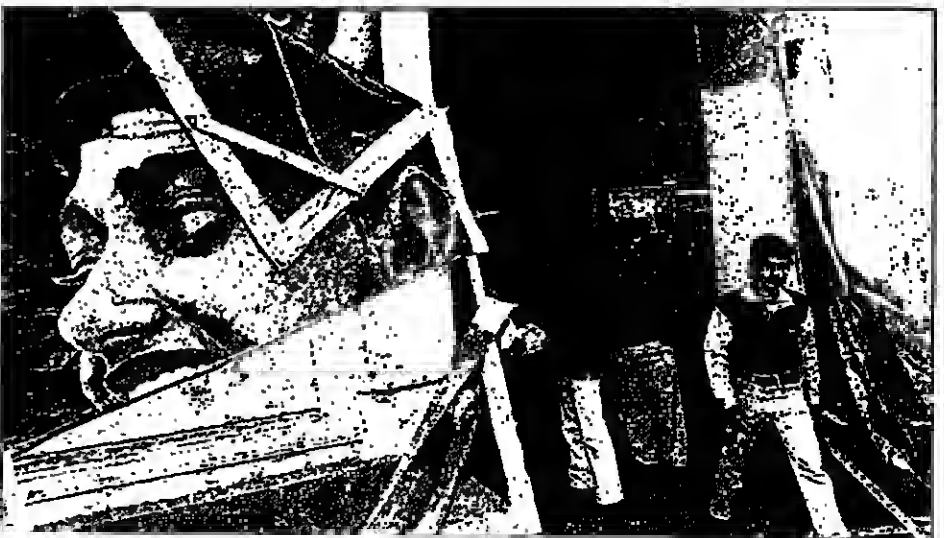
The attack was over within 15 minutes, before police could arrive. The film was closed to close yesterday in any

case, but the Regal and other Delhi cinemas cancelled the remaining screenings. The film was also withdrawn in Bombay after the Shiv Sena attacked two cinemas there on Wednesday, and in the western cities of Surat and Pune.

More ominously, the junior information and broadcasting minister, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said he would re-examine the film — which was passed uncensored by the censor board — to see if it should be banned.

"Projection of such relationships is harmful to Indian society," Mr Naqvi said, but did not condemn the violence.

The Shiv Sena, which is much more of a force in Bombay than in the capital, claims that the love scenes between the two women are an affront to Indian morality, and a danger to the institution of marriage and the raising of children.



The Regal cinema in New Delhi after the Hindu militants' attack

Ms Mehta said it was "arrogant" of the organisation to "bring the movie and wait for television crews to film the attack. It is ludicrous for them to take the law in their own hands," she said. "If they don't like the film, they don't have to go and see it. How can they destroy private

property? How can they walk in and stop a film that has a certificate from the censors? It is total lawlessness."

Two Shiv Sena activists in New Delhi were arrested yesterday, and face charges of trespass and rioting. Ms Mehta said she hoped the future would soon die down.

and that the distributors would continue to market the film in north and west India.

"If we can get an order from the Shiv Sena that they will not touch the film, and that they will not intimidate people trying to see the film, then it can go on again."

Catholic priests face crucifixion for bombings

Karl Wick in Khartoum

WHEN the Pope paid a brief visit to Sudan five years ago, he summoned a powerful metaphor for the persecution that Christians often face under the Khartoum's aggressively Islamic regime, calling it "a particular reproduction of the mystery of Calvary".

Now the regime is bringing the metaphor to life by threatening a pair of Catholic priests with crucifixion.

Hillary Boma and Lina Tujano are charged with setting off almost a dozen bombs in Khartoum on June 30, in an alleged plot to mark celebrations marking the anniversary of the 1989 coup that brought the National Islamic Front to power.

If convicted, the priests and their 18 co-defendants could be crucified under the country's medieval Islamic legal

code. The trial at army headquarters began on October 12 and has been closed to foreign journalists and diplomats. It has been denounced by international human rights groups as a charade based on videotaped confessions most likely produced under torture.

The Catholic Church, the largest Christian denomination in this majority-Muslim country of 32 million, has steadily resisted the government's programme of forced Islamisation.

R has also endured the repercussions. Priests report being stopped and interrogated regularly by secret police. Also routine is the bulldozing of sanctuaries and schools by earthmovers guarded by soldiers.

The Church serves mostly people from the black African, largely Christian, south of Sudan that has been at war with the strongly Muslim Arab north for 15 years. All but two

of the priests' co-defendants are southerners who, like an estimated 1.8 million others during the past 15 years, fled the fighting in the rural south and settled near Khartoum.

The dusty slum town that harbour the transplanted southerners — many containing makeshift churches — account for 40 per cent of the city's population, encircling the capital in a pattern that looks something like a noose to apprehensive government officials. Last month, in a routine demolition, government bulldozers rumbled over a squatter village. The United Nations said the houses of at least 3,000 families were levelled.

Independent observers say the timing of the bombings suggests the government planned them. The blasts occurred not only on the anniversary of the 1989 coup, but on the day that President Omar Hassan al-Bashir signed a constitution that apparently

opened the door to legal opposition parties for the first time since 1989.

The move was greeted with scepticism. A day before the devices exploded — in the middle of the night, injuring no one — a government official warned of "terrorist parties".

Two days later, Mr Bashir used the bombings as a pretext to postpone the promised legalisation of parties.

The New York-based monitoring group, Human Rights Watch, noted that before charging the priests and southerners, security police rounded up 33 others.

"The timing of the arrests and statements by high government officials suggests the bombings served as a pretext to stop opposition political parties from reopening inside Sudan," a statement from Human Rights Watch said.

The charges against the opposition figures were later dropped, and this week a new

law was announced, nominally reinstating a multi-party system, albeit one granting a presidentially-appointed registrar the power to dissolve any party. The priests assumed the role of prime suspects on August 1, when security police swept into St Matthew's Cathedral in Khartoum to arrest Father Boma, chancellor of the Catholic archdiocese of Khartoum, who was accused of masterminding the plot.

When lawyers were permitted to see the suspects, shortly before their trial, all but one suspect reported having been tortured and pleaded not guilty. State television carried a videotape of Fr Boma, aged 57, confessing. Clerics here say he might have done so to spare his junior colleagues, Fr Tujano, from further abuse.

Catholic officials in Khartoum declined to comment. Pleas from Amnesty International and European diplomats have failed to stop the trial.

Abuse fills the air as the island votes today, while Beijing watches anxiously, writes John Gittings

Taiwan all aflutter for the polls

TAIWAN goes to the polls today after a campaign marked by libel, writs and personal abuse, although the official statistics record that fewer votes have actually been bought or sold.

In the fierce battle to control the second biggest city, Kaohsiung, the government candidate distributed 80,000 copies of a video accusing his rival of beheading a notorious murderer.

In the capital, Taipei, accusations of "treachery", bribery and visting hostesses brought libel suits. Scandalous cartoons attacking opponents are displayed outside some campaign headquarters.

The simultaneous contests for the mayor and city council in Taipei and Kaohsiung and 225 seats in an expanded national legislature will be watched closely by Beijing and Washington for any increase in support for Taiwanese independence.

In Taipei the incumbent mayor, the Taiwan-born Chen Shui-bian, calls his opponent, the mainland-born Ma Ying-keou, a foreign "pizza" while he is a good local "dumpling".

Mr Ma, formerly a senior official of the ruling Kuomintang party (KMT), has enlisted the help of President Li Teng-hui to promote the idea that everyone, local or mainland, belongs to the "New Taiwan".

Mr Chen is seen as a future presidential candidate for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which has become the main threat to continued KMT control. Beijing sees the DPP as dangerously pro-independence, although it has moderated its position.

Mr Li — himself a native Taiwanese — has turned up at rallies for Mr Ma dressed as a baseball player, wearing a baseball cap and posing as a space ship commander to put the message across.

But the colourful election style, developed in the 10 years since the Kuomintang began dismantling its one-party rule turned ugly in Kaohsiung's battle of the tapes.

The DPP challenger for mayor, Frank Hsieh, has been denounced by a television celebrity, Pai Ping-ping, whose daughter was kidnapped and brutally killed last year. Mr Hsieh intervened when the mother held a knife to the child's throat, offering to defend him in court.

Supporters of the KMT mayor, Wu Den-yi, have distributed 80,000 copies of a video made by Ms Pai, denouncing Mr Hsieh as "heartless" and "subhuman".

Television advertisements for Mr Wu show an animated image of the murderer, Chen Chin-hsing, appearing to endorse Mr Hsieh. Mr Chen is made to say that he is an "evil man", and that the DPP candidate is another.

Mr Hsieh has said he is fully understood: "Ms Pai's gripe, but he has lodged a lawsuit against Mr Wu, who in turn has filed his defence."

The affair follows hard on the heels of a controversial



A motorcyclist carries Chen Shui-bian's campaign message for re-election as mayor of Taipei through the city

PHOTOGRAPH: TAO-CHUAN YEH

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The affair follows hard on the heels of a controversial

"whispers of love tape" circulated by Mr Hsieh's camp, in which Mr Wu was alleged to be the male voice. This too has brought threats of legal action.

The swirl of innuendo and libel overshadowed figures yesterday showing that the number of reported cases of vote-buying has fallen by half since the last legislative election, three years ago.

Officials admit that the system still has its shortcomings, but invite observers to compare it with the situation in mainland China, where only this week democracy activists

trying to set up a new party were arrested and a computer manager who supplied e-mail addresses to dissidents abroad was accused of "subversion".

Most Taiwanese accept the government view that reunification with Beijing will only be possible — if at all — when democracy is established on the mainland. The pace of democratic reform in Taiwan in the last 10 years has been spurred by the need to enhance Taipei's legitimacy.

In practice, the two main parties have moved closer together. The KMT, which

was committed until 1991 to "reunifying China by force", now accepts Taiwan's de facto independence. The DPP has toned down its call for a declaration of independence, saying that it will not go further if this might cause a crisis with Beijing.

The KMT is now challenged from the right by the New Party, which defected before the last elections and hopes to gain a swing vote in the new legislature. The DPP does well it has to decide whether to recognise the party's strength or denounce it as a threat to the existence of "One China".

regaining the Taipei mayoralty and hanging on to its slim parliamentary majority. A defeat for Mr Ma, if the last-minute effort fails, will symbolise the continuing decline of the party of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek.

No one can be sure how Beijing will respond. It may use the excesses of the election to brush aside the democratic lesson which Taiwan made to stress, as it has made clear through intermediaries like Egypt and South Africa for months, that it is not seeking to blame the entire Libyan regime for an act of mass murder. Its strategy is to coax

'No hidden agenda' on Lockerbie, Cook tells UN chief

James Black
Diplomatic Editor

BRTAIN made a final effort last night to persuade Libya to hand over the Lockerbie bombing suspects, urging the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, to make clear to Libya's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, today that it had no "hidden agenda" in seeking justice.

With a plane standing by in Italy to fly the two suspects out, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, asked Mr Annan to stress in his make-or-break mission that the Anglo-American offer to try the two men in the Netherlands was "genuine and serious".

But Libya's official news agency warned that Colonel Gaddafi could not make a deal, as the decision was one for the Libyan people.

Mr Annan flies to the eastern town of Sirte this morning to seek the surrender of Abdel Basset al-Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, the two accused of planting the bomb that killed 270 people on Pan Am flight 103 and in Lockerbie, 10 years ago this month.

UN officials had said Mr Annan would only go if the chance for a handshake were good. "He is obviously not expecting to be rebuffed but he doesn't have any assurances at all," one well-placed diplomat said last night.

In Washington, state department officials confirmed that an aircraft was waiting in Italy to fly to Tripoli and bring the two Libyans to the Netherlands.

UN officials say Mr Annan understands that Britain and the United States will not negotiate their insistence that, if convicted, the men serve their sentences in a Scottish prison — a point which Mr Cook reiterated last night.

Britain also wants Mr Annan to stress, as it has made clear through intermediaries like Egypt and South Africa for months, that it is not seeking to blame the entire Libyan regime for an act of mass murder. Its strategy is to coax

Col Gaddafi into sacrificing two relatively junior intelligence officers as the price for the lifting of UN sanctions and Libya's return from pariah status to international respectability.

"There is no hidden agenda," Mr Cook told Mr Annan in a 15-minute telephone conversation. "The objective is simply to bring to trial two individuals accused of a serious crime."

Diplomats say they cannot predict what Col Gaddafi will do, though a UN emissary has been in Sirte for the past two days and has told Mr Annan there are grounds for hoping that a deal can be done.

But doubts emerged last night when the Jama news agency in Tripoli reported that any decision to hand over the suspects would be a matter for the Libyan people through its grassroots "popular committees" — made up of Col Gaddafi's followers all around the country — before being approved by the Libya's General People's Congress.

Foreign Office sources said Mr Cook would be talking to his Dutch counterpart over the weekend to discuss the continuing — though apparently incomplete — preparations for a trial being made at Camp Zeist, a former air base near Utrecht. But the Dutch are understood to be ready to take the men into custody if Mr Annan secures their surrender today.

Some diplomats have suggested that Col Gaddafi, desperate to end UN sanctions, may be looking to Mr Annan to provide a face-saving way for him to give in.

Mr Annan is authorised to tell the Libyans that a deal will bring the immediate suspension of sanctions, including a flight ban, in force since 1992 for Libya's refusal to hand over the suspects.

Libya's obvious motive for the attack was revenge for the US bombing of Tripoli in 1986, though until 1981, Iran and Syria were openly suspected of having aided the bombing. But when the indictments were drawn up, Libya was named as the "sole perpetrator".

Republican moderates claim they can block impeachment

Martin Kettle in Washington

LESS than a week before the House of Representatives Judiciary committee vote on articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, moderate Republicans claim that they could help kill an impeachment vote in the full House before Christmas.

Congressman Peter King of New York says that he has the backing of "about 20" Republican colleagues for a

moderate package against Mr Clinton which would include a full impeachment trial in the Senate next year.

Mr King has discussed his proposal with White House officials.

Hardline Republicans dispute Mr King's claim, asserting that all but a tiny number of the party's congressmen

are opposed to his censure plan.

With the party's conservative whip, Congressman Tom DeLay of Texas, openly campaigning against a vote on censure, the full House vote on impeachment may be decided by a handful of votes.

The Judiciary committee has abandoned the plan it adopted on Tuesday to ordain its impeachment inquiry to campaign fund-raising, leaving the Monica Lewinsky case as the sole grounds for charges against Mr Clinton.

Officially the fund-raising inquiry was dropped because the Republican majority counsel David Schippers, who was allowed to examine subpoenaed memos, concluded that they contained no evidence of impeachable offences.

But it seems certain that the Judiciary committee chairman, Henry Hyde, was also privately warned off by the party's Speaker-elect, Bob Livingston, who wants to

bring the impeachment process to an end.

Next week the committee will hold a final round of hearings, which may include a presentation by the White House, before voting.

Republicans on the committee, who have a 21-16 majority, are divided about the number of articles of impeachment. Some want five, others one. None has yet come out against impeachment.

Assuming that the committee votes for at least one article next week, the impeachment resolution must then go to the full House.

"If the Judiciary committee could complete its work next week, we could have a vote on the following week," Mr Livingston said yesterday.

The Republican majority was cut to 223-212 in last month's congressional elections, but because the new House does not take office until January, the vote will be in the existing House of 229.

207. Impeachment requires a simple majority in the House, then a two-thirds majority in the Senate, which the Republicans control 55-45, 12 short of the number needed.

Mr King's censure proposal, not yet finalised, involves three parts — Mr Clinton would be censured, fined for some of the costs of the investigations, and required to make a public admission and apology to Congress.

"The main purpose is to make sure the president is not allowed to walk away unpunished," Mr King said yesterday. "A vote on impeachment, which we believe will not pass, would be giving the president a victory he would not deserve."

Officially, Mr DeLay is not saying whether he thinks that an impeachment resolution would be passed, but hardline party activists are still demanding that efforts to displace Mr Clinton should be made at any cost.

Swiss charge Ukraine's ex-PM

Peter Capella in Geneva

PAVLO Lazarenko, the former prime minister of Ukraine, was charged with money laundering in Switzerland yesterday.

It is alleged that Mr Lazarenko tried to cover up the truth about dirty money held in Switzerland while he was head of the government and prevented its confiscation.

The investigating judge, Laurent Kasper-Ansermet,

said that a "relatively large" sum of money had been seized in Geneva and that he would be asking for Mr Lazarenko to be held in prison in the city until his trial.

Mr Lazarenko was detained by guards in Basel on Wednesday during a routine check as he tried to enter the country from France on a Panamanian passport.

In recent months, several Swiss cantons have seized banking documents and frozen assets linked to the former Ukrainian leader which are reportedly worth about \$250 million. The judicial authorities have declined to confirm the figure.

Swiss officials have received about 20 requests from Ukraine for help in its investigation of Mr Lazarenko, who was sacked by the country's president, Leonid Kuchma, in June 1997.

Mr Lazarenko was also the subject of meetings earlier this month between the Ukrainian justice minister, Suzannah Stanykh, and Swiss judicial officials.

Mr Kasper-Ansermet, said in Geneva that his investigations were not directly related to Ukraine's requests for help, hinting that he would like to try Mr Lazarenko in Switzerland.

The prosecutor-general in Kiev has repeatedly accused Mr Lazarenko of receiving kickbacks in return for state guarantees to private companies to exploit Ukraine's reserves of natural gas.

But Mr Lazarenko has always denied the charges and

earlier this year fought off criminal proceedings when Ukrainian MPs upheld his parliamentary immunity.

Mr Lazarenko became prime minister in May 1996 but owed heads the opposition centre-left movement, Yromada, and accuses the Ukrainian government of conducting a smear campaign.

He is the most prominent public figure to fall foul of a combination of reinforced money laundering laws introduced in Switzerland and political attempts to clean up the country's reputation as a haven for corrupt politicians.

Bankers, lawyers, or any intermediaries in financial transactions have been obliged since April to report any suspicious financial dealings or deposits. In the first six months, the new office received more than 100 notifications, five times more than under the previous voluntary regime.

Eight out of 10 of the cases under investigation involve foreigners. Prosecutors have frozen \$20 million in assets.

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Bearing false witness

Loose Connections

CARLTON TV's award-winning documentary, *The Connection*, will go down in television history as an important programme, though not for the reasons that its makers might have wished. It will be remembered, not as a brave and groundbreaking undercover film about drug-smuggling, but as a watershed in dubious documentary-making. It turns out that virtually every notable claim made in the film was false. Millions of viewers who saw the programme around the world were, simply, fooled. It will be difficult, after *The Connection*, to re-establish the innocent trust that viewers of British television once had that they could inevitably believe the evidence of their eyes and their ears.

The Guardian's investigation into the programme, published six months ago, immediately stimulated a useful and generally constructive debate within the industry about the acceptable limits of bending the literal truth in documentary-making in

order to serve a "higher truth". That debate should be advanced still further by the publication yesterday of Carlton's own investigation into the programme. It is, by and large, a thorough and clear-eyed analysis of the film's many deceptions. The producer, Marc de Beaufort, purported to have filmed a drugs "mule" carrying heroin through customs on to the streets of London. He did no such thing. The mule had no heroin in his stomach and was turned back at Heathrow. It claimed to show the mule swallowing fingers of heroin. The report can find no evidence that it was heroin. It claimed to show an interview with the financial controller of one of the most ruthless cartels in Colombia. This was baloney. All three "criminals" in the film were acting, says the report. The film appeared to show one continuous trip from swallowing the drugs to arriving in London. Not true; it was two journeys, six months apart. The second leg of the journey was not paid for by the cartel, but by the producer, Marc de Beaufort. The interview with the cartel boss was supposed to have taken place at a secret location after a blindfold journey lasting either two hours or two days. It didn't. It was filmed in the producer's hotel bedroom. And so on and so on.

Even the fundamental premise of the entire programme — that it showed a new

heroin route from Colombia to Britain — is rejected by the authors of the report. The panel — chaired by the eminent QC Michael Beloff — also found that the leading actors had been paid to play the parts of the drug traffickers and that £7,000 of the programme's budget could not be accounted for. They found it "most troubling" that Mr de Beaufort destroyed some evidence after the Carlton inquiry was announced and found his overall credibility "questionable". Senior Carlton executives are accused of "serious failings" for not being sufficiently rigorous in testing the allegations and witnesses produced by Mr de Beaufort. But the report accepts that they did not set out knowingly to deceive viewers.

The authors of the report are constructive as well as critical. They concentrate, in particular, on the mechanisms to ensure that controversial programmes are intensively challenged by experienced people not directly connected with the making of the programme. Even more rigorous attention ought to be focused on programmes which involve secret filming, anonymous sources and a reliance on disguised interviewees. The director of programmes must ultimately become involved in the most sensitive films, examining the extent to which the producer can convincingly stand behind the programme. These are all useful sugges-

tions. The *Connection* was a betrayal of viewers and of television itself. If Carlton, by the publication of this report, can do something to help maintain the generally high standards within the industry, then *The Connection* will not have been a completely wasted experiment in film-making.

I think therefore I am

What is the point of philosophy? Obviously, its first purpose is to supply jokes for the rest of us. Ever since the boys from Monty Python quipped that "Aristotle, Aristotle, was a bigger for the bottle," the popular imagination has regarded philosophy as fairly ludicrous. But if philosophy does have a clear, publicly valued purpose it was hardly made apparent by this week's opinion poll of American, British and Canadian students and teachers conducted on behalf of *Philosophers' Magazine*. It showed that Derrida and Marx headed the list of the most overrated thinkers, while the ancients, Plato and Aristotle, were the most highly esteemed. Why is this? True, Marx's reputation has been ruined by the fall of the Berlin wall, but as for Derrida, surely his public reputation among Anglo-Saxon philoso-

phers is low because his texts are all but incomprehensible to those who don't know their Husserl from their Heidegger, or indeed to those who don't have much French. At the heart of anglophone philosophy remains a terrible insularity. This is a shame, not least because anglophone philosophy was once inconceivably separated from Continental thought. Scottish Hume influenced German Kant; German Frege inspired English Russell; and nobody who had pretensions to knowing anything about philosophy could ignore the ramifications of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. What's more, much 20th-century British and American philosophy thrived thanks to the influence of continental emigrés such as Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

We should strive to build intellectual bridges with the rest of Europe rather than retreating further into the austerities of much recent anglophone philosophising. As part of this programme of intellectual renewal, British teachers and students of philosophy would also do well to read the great medieval text by a Continental thinker, *The Consolations of Philosophy* by Boethius, a work that shows us how to live even in an oppressive world. Wittgenstein, who thought philosophy could only supply headaches rather than spiritual comfort, would have hated it.

Letters to the Editor

De Bono and lateral drinking

I AM at a conference in Frankfurt and someone showed me the piece about my work (When's world, G2, December 2). The Siemens representative at the conference told how they now had an innovation unit in each department, based on my methods because "these were the simplest and most effective". Siemens is the largest corporation in Europe. Do you think it just possible that Siemens knows more about my work than the silly idiot who wrote the piece for you? Edward de Bono, London.

THE front-page picture of William Hague (December 4) patting his head is impressive, but can he rub his tummy at the same time? David Williams, Prudhoe, Northumberland.

YOUR profile of Lord Cranborne (December 3) reminds us that he sits in the Lords not through entitlement as a hereditary peer (though he will presumably inherit that right) but because "John Major put him there" in 1992. But doesn't that make him one of John's cronies? F W Grogan, Eastleigh, Hants.

WILL the Conservatives put Lord Cranborne forward as one of the 91? If not, will Labour? Andy Smith, Portsmouth.

SORIAL publicans say increased curbs on drink drivers would "sound the death knell" for many of them (Tougher drink-drive limit rejected, December 3). An unfortunate metaphor given that their opposition will certainly sound the death knell for many innocent road users. Dave Headley, Farnham, Oxon.

Please include a full postal address, even on e-mailed letters, and a daytime telephone number. We may edit letters. Please provide a reference to the relevant article.

Lessons from Islington

I STAND guilty as charged. (What becomes of the middle classes, G2, December 2). And it breaks my heart. Pink because our daughter was privately educated. Lefty because I still want to believe it is possible to have good education and health care for all. We had never envisaged sending our daughter into private education, but when the local school failed to teach her to read and write by the age of 10, we moved her. This meant giving up my career and getting the only reasonably paid job I was capable of. A job that went against many of my principles, but at least my daughter was getting the teaching she needed. I am in a position to buy my way out. But my neighbour wasn't. I am not "uttering" that I was driven to opt out of these state institutions that should be working well for all of us. I am bloody angry about it. I feel deeply betrayed. Perhaps us pink lefties should stop being ashamed for selling out and start shouting and shouting loud. Stephanie Palmer, London.

THAT Islington secondary schools are underperforming is well known. How to change the ethos of education

in Islington and elsewhere is much more difficult to explain. It is not only the middle classes who care about the education of their children. But if you are poor it is far more difficult to make choices.

The crisis in Islington is an acute reflection of the national character. Private education sucks resources and talent out of the public sector and perpetuates the class system. It is a cruel joke for the Government to suggest that the problems in education will disappear as standards in the public sector rise. It won't happen while the private sector feeds the panic and neurosis of the market, and without a massive injection of funds. Charles Thomson, London.

I LIKE Rupert Perry, I am an Islington resident with two daughters of secondary school age. Unlike the chair of education, I chose to send my children to an Islington secondary school, Highbury Fields. Despite the fact that 30 per cent of its students have special educational needs, Highbury Fields improved its GCSE results to near the national average this year. Falling even to mention it perpetuates the thing your article appears to lament. Why not talk to some

of us who do send our children to state schools? Margaret Coffey, London.

ISLINGTON is an over-whelmingly working-class district, with a larger number of council tenants than any other London borough, except Southwark. It also has less public open space than any other urban area in England. There is a small concentration of well-to-do, middle-class residents in Barnsbury, where Catherine Bennett lives, and where once Tony Blair lived. But to portray them as representative of some trendy London borough is ridiculous. Leo Jassim, Warboys, Cambs.

IF "poorer parents" in Islington who want a decent education for their children are "moving to Crouch End", they might as well save their money. Labour Harlequin is the sixth worst LEA in the whole country. In London, it is the only borough over the last council term to have had the A-C pass rate at GCSE fall (by 1.5 per cent, down from 28.4 to 26.9 per cent). The average in London was a rise of 6.2 per cent. Cllr Lynne Featherstone, Lib Dem Leader of the Opposition, Haringey Council.

Green shots

MY ancestors for generations picked the wormwood which made absinthe (Green fairy fires spirits, December 1). But they, and the 23 manufacturers in Pontarlier, all distilled their product. Maceration, the process you described, and used in Spain for some time, produces a drink with similar ingredients but none of the smoothness and flavour of the original. The method of ignoring the drink also seems a little suspect. I would be worried that the alcohol would be burned off. The usual method was to use a slotted spoon on which a sugar cube was placed, water

was poured slowly over the sugar and the syrup dripped into the absinthe. If your readers buy Green Bohemia they will be drinking a novel drink, but sadly not La Fée Verte. Martine Gabriel, Ville du Pont, France.

IF this is only 70 per cent proof, this is less strong than many commonly available strong spirits. You should try a well-known brand of Polish vodka that is 140 per cent proof — you'd get a flame out of that. As for the wormwood, *artemisia* is a common enough shrub, though the potent kind (wormwood) is commoner on the continent than here. Ron Taylor, London.

Centre point

LABOUR MEPs do intend to pool resources to create regional centres (Labour MEPs promise clean regime, December 3). Under the PR system proposed by the Government, each region will have a team of MEPs. It makes sense to have a regional centre where they can be contacted. However, the resources used will not be handed over to the party. They will go to a trust, comprised of regional MEPs, and administered according to European Parliament rules. Alan Donnelly MEP, Leader, European Parliamentary Labour Party.



The world that women make

MATTHEW Johnston writes (Letters, December 3): "Take a piece of paper. Go to the window and write down everything in sight that has been built or maintained by women." For a person to walk to Matthew Johnston's window, he needs to have received enormous care and attention. He needs to have been well enough to allow him to grow. He needs to have been nurtured to achieve levels of literacy which permit him to read the Guardian. Somebody needs to have played with him, talked and listened to him. He needs, if he is going to stay for long in this hypothetical room, to go to the toilet and for somebody to clean that toilet. He needs somebody to have been cleaning the toilets on which he has sat nursing his resentment of women since birth.

Whether the people who did these complex tasks, as men or women, is not the point. The point is — don't render the work traditionally done more by women than men, as invisible, or non-existent, just because it isn't as easy to spot as a building. Deborah Freeman, Manchester.

I WENT to the window and I wrote down everything I could see which has been built or maintained by women. In a couple of minutes I had counted 16 men. Pauline Bagg, Waltham Abbey, Essex.

I DON'T need a window to see that roads etc were built by men. I've known this since I was a small girl because women were not allowed to do such things. This is what feminists have tried to rectify. The work force is now nearly 50-50 male/female and women are so successful that there are dark mutterings about "things going too far the other way". As for living in caves, research now suggests that since women were the "gatherer" side of our hunter-gatherer ancestors, it is likely that they were the ones who decided to start growing food in fixed, convenient locations, allowing groups of people to settle in one place. The rest, as they say, is history. Lynna Parry-Wood, Manchester.

ALL the artefacts Mr Johnston mentioned were built and maintained during paid working hours. Most of the men will go home, sit back and expect the domestic chores to be done by their womenfolk. J M Bartlett, London.

YOU'RE on the wrong side of the window, mate. Jean Jago, Nottingham.

BACK to your cave, Mr Johnston. Pauline Mayer, Yately, Hampshire.

Film-makers rally behind The Connection executive

FOLLOWING the publication of Carlton Television's report on the documentary programme *The Connection*, we are writing to you to add our voices to the controversy over the role played by Roger James as executive producer. None of us was involved in or can contribute information of value about the making of this film. However, as producers and directors who worked with Roger at Carlton, and Carlton, we are all grateful for his open, highly professional and warm-hearted support, often in very difficult managerial circumstances, his encouragement of ideas and issues that were not regarded as "ratings sexy", such as the environment and the struggles of ordinary people, especially those in faraway places, and his patient nurturing of young film-makers who could barely get in the door elsewhere. All of us respect Roger as a professional of integrity and know enough about the documentary process to appreciate that the executive who remains at base has to

rely on the integrity of those who represent him in the field. We believe it would be a tragic loss to British television if this highly talented executive producer was in any way prevented from continuing his career. Richard Blanchard, Ashley Bruce, Glen Cardno, Chris Christoffe, Antra Gliniska, Adrian Cowell, Richard Creasey, Rebecca Dobbs, Francis Gerrard, Nick Gifford, Roger Graef, Malcolm Hurst, Alan James, Christopher Jeans, Ned Johnston, Robert Lamb, Mickey Lemle, Ken Loach, Alan Lowery, Colin Luké, Sue Mallinson, Christopher Martin, Luke Menges, Claudia Milne, Brian Moser, David Munro, Mike Nunn, Ron Orders, Robert Perkins, John Pilger, Amanda Ruidman, Stephen Scott, Bruno Sorrentino, Peter Spry-Leverson, Robert Stamp, Charles Stewart, Toni Strassburg, Anthony Thomas, Julian Ware, Lucy Willis.

Case derailed

I AM the lead solicitor in the steering committee of five firms of solicitors which will be representing the victims of the Southall train crash at the public inquiry. The committee welcomes the clear signal being sent to the rail industry that failure to discharge their responsibility for passenger safety can lead to criminal liability. However, criminal liability is normally understood to be the liability of individual people who can face the risk of going to prison. Prosecutions under the Health & Safety at Work Act against companies for deaths at work resulting in companies being fined have long been dismissed by victims as being of little deterrent value. Corporate manslaughter prosecutions have always involved not just the company being prosecuted,

but at least one individual who is, in Lord Denning's phrase, "a controlling mind". The Crown Prosecution Service are prosecuting Great Western Trains for manslaughter, but are not prosecuting any individual person other than the train driver, who can hardly be described as a controlling mind. If the company pleads guilty there will be an examination of liability of the railway industry for what happened. The only penalty that can be imposed against the company is a fine, albeit an unlimited one. The victims have waited 14 months for this decision and it is to be hoped that the Crown Prosecution Service has made the correct judgment on how to pursue corporate criminal responsibility for the sad deaths of seven people. Louise Christian, Southall Train Crash Steering Committee.

As a top Bosnian Serb general steps into the dock, the real architects of evil face retribution at last

No hiding place

Martin Woolacott



WHEN General Radislav Krstic appears in court in The Hague, as he is expected to do on Monday, there will be a qualitative change in the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The tribunal has grown in stature since its foundation, but it needed to deal with suspects who had overall command responsibility rather than individuals personally involved in torture and killing. Krstic is the first senior officer or politician

suspected of such overall responsibility for war crimes to come before the court.

It is not only that the Bosnian Serb general, arrested by American troops this week, commanded the units which took Srebrenica in 1995 and whose soldiers, or some of them, were then responsible for the worst single atrocity of the Bosnian war. Nor that the Dutch people will fasten on every detail of his evidence for whatever light it can throw on the behaviour of their own soldiers, who were the UN garrison of the Srebrenica safe area and who so signally failed to protect it.

What Krstic could also provide is information going beyond his own role to illuminate the responsibility of General Ratko Mladic, to whom Krstic reported directly, of Radovan Karadzic, and of senior people in Belgrade, up to and including Slobodan Milosevic himself.

The trail that leads to these men is already heavy with clues. But, by bringing certain connections into the open, the examination of

Krstic could not only seal the fate of Mladic and Karadzic, but make it impossible for the contradictory and repugnant Western and Russian policy of dealing with Milosevic as a partner as well as an adversary to continue for much longer. In this way the tribunal could become, as many of its supporters envisaged from the start, an instrument not only of justice, but of enforcement and intervention in former Yugoslavia as potent in its way as military force or economic sanctions.

Once again this week the dismal charade of treating the man who bears more responsibility than any other leader as if he was a responsible statesman was enacted in Belgrade. Christopher Hill, the American mediator on Kosovo, handed Milosevic a draft peace plan. Milosevic handed Hill a counter-plan. Both solemnly promised to study the respective documents. There may be no practical alternative to such encounters for the time being, but the context of Western and Russian policy-making is changing.

In America, the argument that there can be no fundamental improvement in either Bosnia or Kosovo until the regime in Belgrade changes is gaining more supporters. Senator Richard G Lugar, for instance, has laid out a programme for supporting the democratic opposition in Serbia. James Rubin, the State Department spokesman, this week responded to criticisms that US policy was sustaining Milosevic in power by saying that the Serbian leader was part of the problem rather than part of the solution and that he could be no guarantor of stability in Kosovo.

Rubin's remarks produced a predictable flurry of attacks on the United States in the rump Yugoslav parliament and in the controlled press. As for Russia, while the government remains opposed to the use of military force in most circumstances, it is well known that Yevgeny Primakov has no liking for Milosevic, and no confidence in his future.

Milosevic has to an extent brought this increased hostility on himself by his recent

actions, which combine an assault on what remains of free institutions in Serbia with a purge of some of the more rational and independent of his own officials, as well as what looks like preparations for a confrontation with Montenegro.

THE CLOSURE and legal hobbling of independent newspapers and broadcasters, and the dismissals of independent academics at Belgrade University were followed by a purge of his own inner circle, which brought down the army chief of staff, the head of intelligence, the air force commander, a senior official of his own party and many of their associates.

Some at least of these people are out because, whatever their complicity in Milosevic's policies in the past, they objected to the brutal campaign in Kosovo or to actions which now risk a clash with Montenegro. Most have been replaced by men loyal to Milosevic's wife, Mirjana. In Belgrade the couple are being openly compared

with the Ceausescus. The possibility of a crisis over Montenegro has reminded those who have to deal with Milosevic that this mischief maker never sits still. He feeds on crises, which he both creates and then exploits in a Jekyll and Hyde manner, first making peace, and then making peace, and deriving momentum from both processes.

What is also clarifying the minds of the outside powers is consideration of how costly the business of coddling Milosevic has become. At the end of this year the mandate of Nato's stabilisation force in Bosnia has to be renewed. The UN representative in Bosnia, Elizabeth Rehn, has estimated that the 23,000 strong force will be needed for another four years. Some think it will be much longer.

The cost of the 2,000 international verifiers destined for Kosovo, and of the extrication force which will be stationed in Macedonia to get them out in the event of trouble, now has to be added to the Bosnia and quasi-military costs, there is the expense of the

civil effort in Bosnia and of economic aid in Bosnia and Kosovo. In the former, only a limited economic revival is possible; in the second, there is likely to be no revival at all. For Russia, the cost of supplying Serbia with gas and oil for which Belgrade is unable to pay — gas and oil without which Serbia's economy would finally collapse — must be a serious consideration for a country whose finances are under strain.

The West and Russia possess a dual key which, turned in concert, could hasten the end of the Milosevic regime. The West sustains Milosevic by treating him as the most important diplomatic partner in the Balkans. Russia sustains him by giving him help whenever Western military action is threatened and by the vital energy supplies. Russia is constrained by the state of opinion in the Duma, where support for Serbia is a test issue for the communists and the nationalists. That is a serious complicating factor, but the effort ought still to be made to co-ordinate Western and Russian policy.

The indictment of Milosevic must at some point become an issue. That is why the arrest of General Krstic is important, in itself and because it could be a sign that the decision has been taken to attempt arrest of Karadzic and Mladic in the near future.

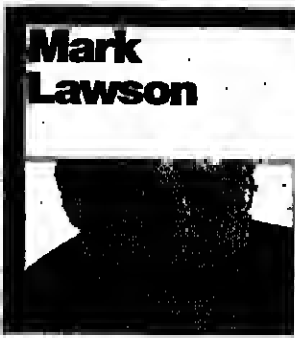
Some believe Karadzic has tried to negotiate his own arrest, and has already sent out of Bosnia many documents he believes would be useful in his defence. The problem may be to ensure that he does not lose his life in any attempt at arrest — either in crossfire or to bodyguards who might conceivably have been charged to kill him as a last resort if his arrest was imminent.

Whether Karadzic himself has seen the writing on the wall is unknown, but it is time others did so. It is only a matter of time before the problem will be one of managing the transition in Serbia itself and trying to ensure both that it is not bloody and that it does not lead to a regime no better, or not much better, than that of Milosevic and his wife.

Saturday opinion

Here is the news from the BBC: its next boss could come from the US

Auntie's imports



Mark Lawson

ONE OF THE BBC's big drama productions this Christmas is *The American*, an adaptation of Henry James's novel about a rich and successful man from the US who comes to Europe, where he is despised, patronised and plotted against by suspicious inhabitants.

By delightful coincidence, just before the BBC unveiled this drama to the critics, it was reported that Howard Stringer — the president of Sony in the US and former chief of CBS television — is being considered as a possible candidate for director general of the BBC when Sir John Birt retires in spring 2000. Those who watch — or, like me, work for — the BBC staff may now find in *The American* metaphors which Henry James never intended.

The name of Howard Stringer is frequently mentioned in connection with senior jobs in British television — he was rumoured to be in the running to become chief executive of Channel 4 — and always causes great excitement. This is partly because those who are only semi-literate in American television culture confuse him with Jerry Springer, the sexually outrageous American talk show host.

This misunderstanding may work in Stringer's favour. Startled BBC staff adjusting to the prospect of a giant phallus being attached to the statue of Ariel above Broadcasting House — and the handing over of the airwaves 24 hours a day to shows with titles like *Hot To Trot*, *Living With A Nymphomaniac* — may subsequently be relieved to find that their

American has already been heavily exposed to the local climate through the prevalence of American products in this country. The reverse traffic consists largely of screenings of BBC costume dramas and the occasional magazine piece about Cool Britannia. While it would be novel to have a director general who actually needed to be introduced to Peter Mandelson, the job of running the BBC involves so many social and political nuances — especially with devolution looming — that it must be doubtful whether even a Welsh-American could rebrand himself rapidly enough.

Yet Stringer's outsider status would in the eyes of his supporters be the main attraction as the second assumption underlying his candidacy would be that the BBC must permanently be revolutionised from without. Until Birt was brought in from LWT (followed by a chairman, Sir Christopher Bland, from the same source), the director general had traditionally risen through the ranks.

BUT THE Thatcherite view that the corporation needed to be refashioned by an external candidate resulted in the importing of figures from commercial television. The idea that an outsider's always best may now have become dogma at Broadcasting House. Yet, intriguingly, if the BBC governors were to bring in Stringer or another external candidate now, they would effectively be signalling the end of Birtism, as the man flying in on Concorde would have little knowledge of or connection with the succession structures carefully put in place by the current director general.

The third lesson to be drawn would be that the British Broadcasting Corporation is — like many of this country's famous industries — now seen essentially as a global business which, like the Times or the Telegraph, might just as easily be run by a foreigner as by anyone else. Birt has encouraged above all the internationalisation of the BBC, through global and digital services. But the difficulty remains — and would be the biggest obstacle to Stringer getting the job — that the BBC is overwhelmingly funded by the British for the British.

In this sense, for Birt, replacement by Stringer would contain both vindication and irony. Recruitment to Broadcasting House from Sony/CBS — even if the candidate had domestic and not foreign connections for the translation — would seem to confirm the BBC's international business credibility, a status which has been Birt's main goal as director general.

But, were this reputation to be sealed by Stringer's appointment, there would also be poignancy for Birt. For it is widely thought that he once contemplated the opposite journey. Admitted to the American television industry — which gave him a special Emmy award for his achievements at the BBC — Sir John was mentioned in connection with some US television postings towards the end of his first term. But it seems that he was felt finally to be too highbrow and too English to preside over an American cultural empire. It would be calling to see Stringer overcome the opposite objections.

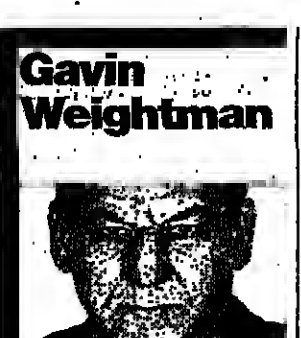
Whether or not Stringer becomes the first director general of the BBC's second century, the fact that his candidacy is even contemplated is highly revealing of the change of culture within Broadcasting House and British television generally.

In a novel about the BBC, Birt's corporation would indeed be handed over at the end of the 20th century to an American executive working for a Japanese multinational. The historical and cultural curve is just so perfect. The screening this Christmas of *The American* — a classic BBC costume drama made with one eye on the US market — will hold an extra level of meaning for those who watch or work for the BBC.



A. KRAMER

Faking it



Gavin Weightman

AFTER a damning internal inquiry, Carlton TV concluded yesterday that their own sensational drug-smuggling programme *The Connection* should never have been shown because "scenes in the programme were fake".

I am a practising documentarist, so I was concerned that they went on to say: "Documentary programme-makers need carefully to review some habits of their trade, if TV documentaries are to continue to be a service to and trusted by viewers."

The inquiry rejected the *Connection* producer's excuse that: "Documentary techniques and the creative use of film grammar are not lies" (although they conceded that "this kind of approach to documentary-making is shared by other people in the industry in varying degrees").

Carlton ruled: "The scenes should not have been presented in this way. This avowedly serious programme should have opted without hesitation for strict reliability." So should the public worry about me? I have

mocked up countless sequences in my films. It would be wrong to claim that I have had no sleepless nights over what I have done, but I would say overall that I contemplate my mocked up sequences not with guilt but pride. They were, I would argue, "legitimate fakes". On occasions you find yourself cheating in order to arrive at a more convincing account of what you believe to be the truth.

It is for this reason, I believe, that the TV community was at first so unwilling to condemn outright what was done in *The Connection*. We have all faked sequences, and we all have a concept of what is a legitimate fake and what is illegitimate.

There is a principle you can apply, which is this: "It is legitimate if what you are trying to convey, by whatever means,

represents the truth as you know it". I can give a couple of examples from my own films. In an ITV documentary, *Christmas Past*, we came across a wonderful interviewee in his eighties who had been on the Western Front, on December 24, 1914. At 11pm he had heard carols singing in the German trenches. He had climbed the first step and saw, to his astonishment, lighted Christmas trees all along the trenches. It was the start of the celebrated truce of 1914 where the two sides met in no man's land.

There is no archive film of this extraordinary event. My solution was to mock up the scene he had described and I found myself sitting on the floor in a Wandsworth studio behind a model of the trenches, waving a piece of corrugated plastic in front of

lights which shone through holes drilled in the triangular shape of little Christmas trees to give a flicker effect.

When he saw the scene, which lasted only a few seconds on screen, the executive producer exclaimed: "Where did you find that?" We explained that we had mocked

it up. Was it legitimate? We felt it was, though we had no idea really what the viewer would make of it. And to write "Reconstruction" over it would have ruined the story. We simply said nothing about what was on screen — we did not claim to have unearthed an amazing bit of "never seen before" archive material. Was this a legitimate fake? I believe so, though others might disagree.

THERE is one other fake that I still worry about now, though I do not feel what we did was really reprehensible. In wildlife filmmaking, fakery is absolutely stock-in-trade. The series was *City Safari*, about wildlife in London. We made enquiries and were introduced to a falconer with his kestrel called Rosie who, in fact, had a starring role in the BBC's *Life On Earth*.

He brought along a few dead sparrows and set up a scene for us. Rosie was apparently stooping on the dead bird with the Tower of London in the background. It was a fantastic shot. The director of programmes exclaimed: "Amazing! How did you get that?" When we told him we had faked it, he was a little — well, fallen. But then that was the only way to compete in terms of production values with the big guns of wildlife filmmaking. Again, we did not put "reconstruction" up on screen. We just said kestrels live mainly on sparrows in London, which was true.

The difficulty with the mocked up sequences in the film *The Connection* is not that they were faked, but what the film-makers claimed about them. As the Carlton report says: "Had the drug trafficking scenes been broadcast as reconstruction rather than reality, the programme would have been a valuable one, if not a candidate for prizes."

However, if you go on to claim in narration that your own hotel room is a "secret location" when it patently is not then you are deliberately misleading the viewer. It is likely that you would only contemplate taking such a desperate course of action if you really did not have much of a story in the first place. If your story has crashed because you cannot get the people you need to make it work, you have to either abandon it altogether or try to salvage something of interest from what you do know.

In such circumstances it is no defence to say: "Everyone fakes things up in documentary filmmaking". That is true, but there is fakery which helps illustrate a story you know to be true and fakery which takes the place of a real story which you have not managed to get. The first is legitimate and the second is not.

Gavin Weightman is an independent television producer

The television community was at first unwilling to condemn *The Connection* outright. We've all faked sequences

How novel, if the director general had to be introduced to Peter Mandelson

putative new boss is famous in American television circles mainly for luring the talk-show host David Letterman from NBC to CBS.

Another reason for Stringer's visibility on British media shortlists is that he is not entirely an American. Rather as the Conservatives used to stress the Scottish origins of Ian McGregor — the "elderly imported American", as the then Bishop of Durham called him, brought in to run the National Coal Board in the Eighties — so Stringer supporters in this country point to his Welsh birth, British passport and recent purchase of a house in Oxfordshire with apparent eye to retirement here. So, were he to be imported to the BBC, he could not strictly be described by bishops or anyone else as American, or indeed elderly, for he is 55.

EVEN so, the suggestion that Stringer might run the BBC (and the fact that this proposal is taken seriously both internally and externally) reveals three significant assumptions about this country and its television which would not have been the case 10 years ago.

The first is that British and American culture are largely interchangeable. There is much evidence for this view, particularly in a week when Channel 4 spent a reported £400,000 on signing up Monica Lewinsky for an interview. It's also clear that Stringer's initial Welshness does not seem to have disadvantaged him in the American entertainment industry, while Tina Brown, Harold Evans, Anna Whitour and others flourished when making a culture jump later in their careers.

However, a Brit going to

Just this once, the Government should give in to blackmail

Dumb and dumber



Catherine Bennett

LONG ago, in a different world, when Britain had more than one political party, Labour activists went looking for votes. They courted Worcester Woman, the temperamental vox populi of Basilidon. Few voters, however, received the kind of special, dedicated attention that Labour lavished on Worcester Woman. After Education, Education, Education, it was Rabbits, Rabbits, Rabbits. Not to mention foxes, mink, piglets, hens, sheep, mice and monkeys: it seemed that virtually everything that came out of the Ark stood to benefit from a Labour victory. Only freshwater fish — after all, anglers are voters, too — and the vermin underclass of cockroaches, wasps and lice, were left to the protection of the Tories. The party became so strongly identified with four-legged happiness that IFAW, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, presented it with £1 million, believing it offered "the best, across-the-board deal for animals."

In case there was any doubt about who cared most for our dumb chums, the party brought out a leaflet called *New Labour, New Life for Animals*. "Labour has consistently shown itself as the only party to trust on issues of animal welfare", it boasted. "Labour is the only party with carefully researched policies, and the political will to carry them out." There followed no end of encouraging news, the keeping of circus animals should be regulated, it simply "wanted" — who doesn't? — the countryside to become "ecologically richer". But there was enough vigorous proclamation to convince many animal lovers that Labour would really change things. Coming out against cruelty in food production, for example, Labour said: "We will outlaw the debanking of poultry except for veterinary reasons." It declared itself "totally opposed to fur farming", and said it would "take action to end this cruel method as soon as practicable". It repeated its commitment to a free vote on hunting. It said it would look at the welfare of laboratory animals: "we will support a Royal Commission to review the effectiveness and justification of animal experiments, and to examine alternatives". The whole thing carried the signature of Tony Blair. Knowing he was a pretty straight kind of guy, many people believed him. "A lot of our members voted Labour on the strength of that leaflet", says a spokeswoman for the National Anti-Vivisection Society.

It seems unlikely that Barry Horne, the prisoner who is now approaching the 60th day of his hunger strike, ever voted at all — a career in ur-

ban terrorism is probably incompatible with suffrage — but he certainly believed New Labour's pledges, or assurances, or whatever form of commitment they amounted to. It is to protest against the Government's failure to support a Royal Commission that he is starving himself. If the Government does not give in, and establish the commission before the next election, he will, his associates say, die for the cause. After that, unruly funeral processions and a makeshift tribute from Brigitte Bardot will be the least of it. If Horne dies, the police expect a renewal of violence against

people and property. The Animal Rights Militia has already threatened to kill 10 people if Horne starves to death.

The Government says it has no plans to set up a Royal Commission, and is "not prepared to allow policy to be dictated by blackmail". While one sympathises with this reluctance to indulge threats of self-slaughter from disappointed voters — after all, where would it end? — the outrage is overdue. Horne is not asking the Government to act against its expressed intentions. Indeed he is simply demanding that it does what it said it would do. And while it must, of course, be disagreeable to be manipulated by a convicted shop-bomber, the Government has no one to blame for this nasty ultimatum but itself. It should have

been more careful. Its de-beaked chickens are coming home to roost.

No one likes to be tricked — and a coalition of passionate pressure groups, easily roused to fury and demonstrations, was not, manifestly, going to forgive New Labour for a cynical show of support.

AT Compassion in World Farming, Peter Stevenson, the political and legal director, says Labour has "disappointed many, many people" — including himself. While he believes in the integrity of Elliot Morley, Labour's spokesman on animal welfare, he doubts if Morley's superiors — Straw, Mandelson, Campbell, Blair — have any genuine commitment to animal welfare. "I don't think they care, at all." Certainly, he admits, Labour says nicer things about animals than the Tories ever did, and has even managed to get animals re-classified in Europe, as "sentient beings" instead of agricultural products in terms of animal welfare, however, almost nothing has changed. Labour's New Life for Animals has not featured a ban on de-beaking, or fur farming, or any reduction in live exports. The Tories did, he points out, ban two cruel farming practices: veal crates and sow stalls. "What has Labour banned? In terms of concrete action, the answer is nothing."

Why doesn't the Home Office simply announce that a Royal Commission will be set up, as advertised, and stop Horne killing himself? It would hardly be a policy U-turn and such a capitulation would deprive animals rights extremists of what they most want and should not be given: their first martyr.

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Paul Leyton

By rocket and snail

AS chief development engineer for Britain's Black Knight rocket in the 1950s, Paul Leyton, who has died aged 84, laid the foundations for Britain to launch its only national satellite. But having presided over half of the 22 successful sub-orbital launchings of Black Knight from Woomera in Australia, Leyton lost heart because of waning government support and abandoned rocketry to become a successful restaurateur.

In 1971, Black Knight's successor, Black Arrow, put Britain's Prospero satellite in orbit, making this country the sixth nation after Russia, the United States, France, Japan and China to achieve orbital capability. But even before that launch took place Edward Heath's government had justified Leyton's decision to pull out by cancelling the project.

Leyton began as an apprentice at Austin Motors in 1931 after attending Kingswood School, Bath. A Methodist minister's son, he was brought up on the Isle of Wight, where his rocket career was to blossom. Later, tiring of the motor industry and though unqualified, he turned to teaching at Tipton, Staffordshire. While on a teacher-training course he learned to fly with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and in 1938 joined the RAF. With war approaching he was transferred to the air branch of the Royal Navy and the RAF School of Aero Engineering at Hendon, Bedfordshire.

His engineering skills were honed with the Fleet Air Arm during the war, and the system of aircraft maintenance which he devised was adopted throughout the Navy. He served in the aircraft carriers *Argus* and *Furious*, and was awarded the DFC when an aircraft crashed-landed on the deck of *Furious* and he dashed to rescue the pilot from the flames. He claimed to be the only naval officer fully qualified as pilot, navigator, and flight engineer, and was a lieutenant-commander when he returned to civilian life in 1945.

With Sperry Gyroscope in 1951, he worked on the Navy's first surface-to-air missile, the Sea Slug, and then moved to Vickers Armstrong as a chief trials engineer. In 1966 the Isle of Wight-based Saunders Roe company invited him to join its Black



Grounded... the Black Knight rocket developed by Leyton (left). With it, Britain could have joined the space race — a point made by a 1956 Daily Mail cartoon (above) showing Harold Macmillan arriving in Washington in black knight attire to ask the Americans: "Excuse me — want any help?"

Knight rocket team as chief development engineer.

He began by constructing a test site for tethered trials on a cliff edge near the Needles (maintained for the benefit of astonished tourists to this day). There was less opposition to rocket engine noise at that time, and the rocket was almost completely developed there before live firings were started in Australia.

COMPARED with the massive rockets for launching missiles and satellites in the US/Soviet space race, the Black Arrow was puny. It was only 43ft tall — but was able to place a 242lb satellite into a low polar orbit. Compared with the billions being spent by the rival superpowers, it was costing less than £2.5 million a year. But even that proved too much for a sceptical government facing an over-burdened budget.

When Leyton opted out of the doomed programme he did so with good grace, accompanying his departure with a letter to the Times admitting that space research was not the answer to all, or even many of Britain's problems. He prophesied that in time it would benefit all branches of engineering and

"provide a way of further satisfying our natural curiosity about the nature of the physical universe".

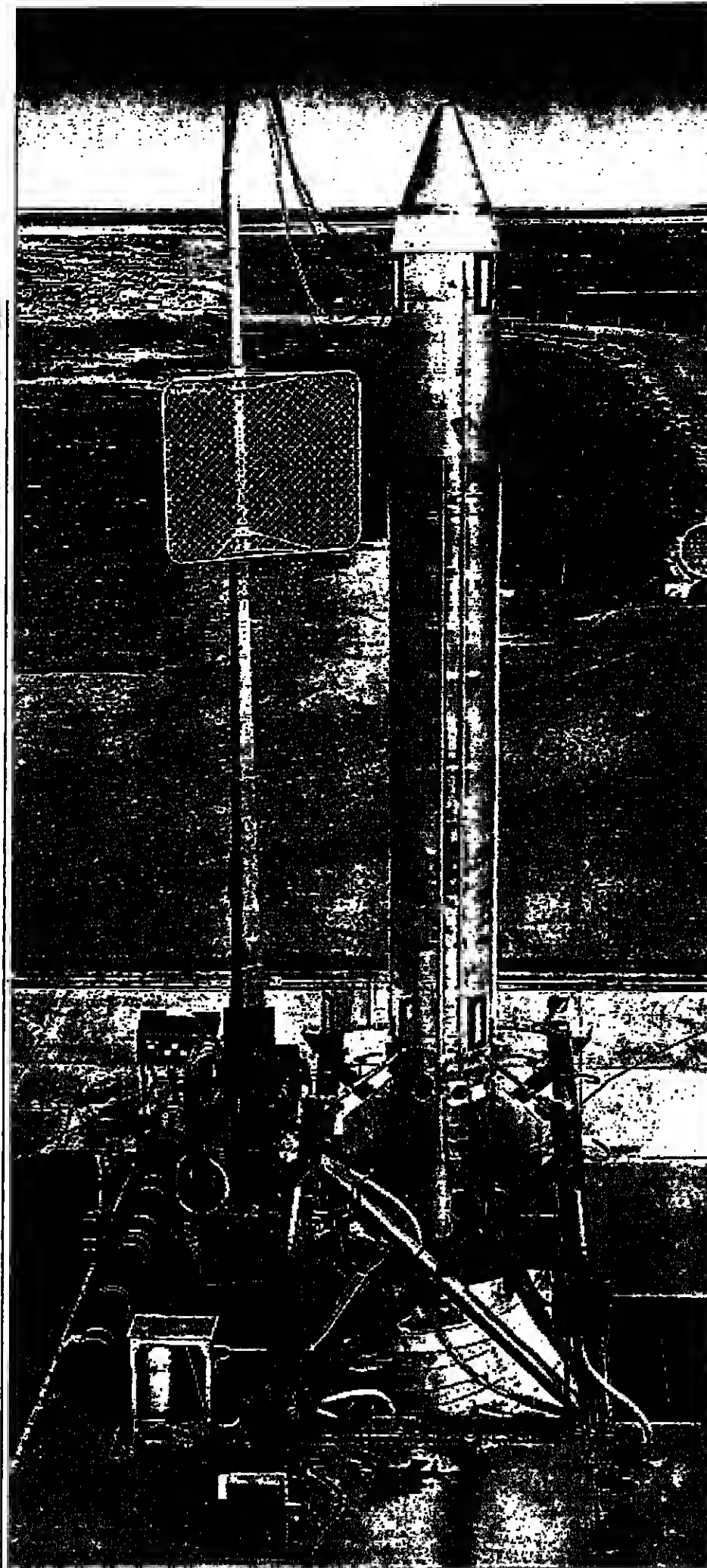
He and his wife Nancy established a gourmet restaurant, in a former public house called the Miners' Arms, near the Somerset village of Priddy. They discovered that lead-miners in the Mendip Hills had traditionally cooked and eaten the local snails, sometimes known by the more palatable name of Mendip Wallfish.

The Leytons were soon breeding the snails, and as garlic-haters they served them with a sauce of herbs, butter and cheese. Good food awards followed, and Leyton's scientific approach to catering led him to pioneer frozen foods. The invention of a "temperature stick" enabled him to mail frozen snails and other delicacies to a large clientele who could check that they had not thawed during transit.

They retired in 1973 and returned to the Isle of Wight, where Leyton became a county councillor. Nancy died in 1983, and he is survived by their four sons.

Reginald Turnbull

Paul Leyton, rocket engineer, restaurateur, born June 1, 1914; died November 4, 1998



Face to Faith

Why everyone needs someone

Ani Chudrun

OCASIONALLY people say to me "you should live in the real world", which seems funny because, as a Buddhist nun, I've had time to contemplate "the real world" — and if it's discussing what Grant Mitchell did last night, I wonder who's living the illusion.

We need to take time to understand each other, to see why people do what they do, because the motivation behind our actions may be surprisingly similar. Everyone wants to be happy, to feel satisfied, and to know their life isn't wasted, perhaps it is only how we go about things that is different.

For instance, when people say "but you're just running away", we can look around and see that everyone retreats from society. Whether it is on how and why we retreat. Watching TV is often a retreat from society. Reading a newspaper is the same.

"But I need to know what's going on" sounds like the voice of addiction. "What's going on" is that we watch programmes about old people left abandoned in their homes, and are so busy watching the TV that nobody goes to see how their elderly neighbour is. Reading a newspaper is often no more than abdicating responsibility for the time it takes to read — which is retreat in its negative aspect, ie wasting time.

One person reads a newspaper and feels inspired to help in the community, another reads the same article and stumps in the armchair, feeling it is all too much and there is nothing worth doing. Same article, different reaction — which indicates that not everyone should be doing the same thing. It is what motivates us that is critical. To be aware of our habitual reactions is useful as guidance for what we should do. Basic wisdom is knowing whether what we are doing actually helps us achieve what we really want.

One person becoming a nun may be for the same reason that someone else is busily making money: activity fuelled by the wish to be happy, and hopefully share it with others. The difference is how we go about it. "With money I can have this and this, and then I'll be happy" is materialism. People do not live just for money, but it seems that money and happiness have been tied in a dubious knot — at its tightest, it is greed.

Slowly contemplating the situation allows a basic truth to emerge — that happiness is a state of mind, not an external object. How, for instance, do we handle a greed, an insatiable appetite that threatens our very existence? Here is an indication of monasticism and its use in the community. If society is out on a dangerous limb — trying to grab random bits of happiness — some responsible members of it will

offer themselves as a counter-balance. You can treat "I want more, I want more" by its opposite: "I am content". Ordination is a renunciation of the belief that happiness is an external object. It sets a different example.

A group of us are presently working to transform a former police station into a community centre for the future. Being around in my robes means children (and adults) see there are people who live life differently. Milling along in a shopping mall I feel I have a place; balancing extremes. Ordination is not one person thinking only of themselves; it is one person acting on the understanding that we are all inter-dependent.

Interdependence is the key. To understand it we need to let go of the ridiculous notion that we can ever be independent. As soon as we strive to be independent, we prove we depend on something. We are, for example, dependent on our mother and father for our very existence. In turn, our parents' existence depends on four past or future ancestors may have died but that does not mean that we happened without them.

The idea that money brings independence is a fallacy. Take, for instance, our daily bread — how many people are involved in that? If you buy it,

Happiness is a state of mind not an external object

someone else must have done the baking. To sustain the "interdependent you", how many people does it take? Trying to appear independent necessitates ignoring the ways things are, ignorance, as the Buddha said, begins with "I".

One way or another we are connected to everything. The butterfly flapping its wings and the ensuing avalanche comes to mind. Through science or faith — which are themselves interdependent — we come to the same conclusion. We cannot be human without belonging to the human race.

Once we understand the notion of interdependence then there is no separation between monasticism and the community. It really has got nothing to do with bow far away monks and nuns appear to be; it is to do with your understanding. We are all inextricably linked; apparent parts of a not-so-apparent whole.

However long it takes in silent reflection for the realisation of interdependence to permeate your very being, it is worth it. For it is then, and only then, that one can really contribute to the community. And the community is you.

Ani Chudrun is setting up a Buddhist Centre in Haywards Heath, Sussex. For more information ring 01444 482945

A Country Diary

SOUTH SHROPSHIRE: Where the Only sequence southwards through the gap between Wenlock Edge's south end and that boss of high ground to the west sits medieval Stokesay — castle and church and farm. The meek winter sun on a recent morning washed overhanging, ironed its timber gables, ironed and tangle in contrasting with festoons of scarlet rosehips in the dry mist below. There were still plenty of windfall apples too, their exquisite flavour (of some tongue

forgotten variety) putting to shame the docile, imported sorts so common now.

Climbing southwards I was soon beyond the traction engine and stationery bales over the level crossing on the Hereford line and into Stoke Wood. There were voices above me and a group of people were soon visible, picnicking where the last golden sweet chestnut, leaves fluted against the chill sky. In this unlikely setting they turned out to be members of the Arthur Ransome Society enjoying a holiday in these western hills.

ROGER REDFERN

Weekend birthdays



THE life and work of Dave Brubeck, 78 tomorrow, should be enough to warm the cockles of any third age advocate's heart. No other jazz musician could match his triumph last month, rounding off a 13-date tour of Britain with the same rave reviews that greeted the concert hall against the jazz club, his image — all those cold war tours as an ambassador of American music — and his sheer popularity; remember *Take Five* actually made it to the pop charts. Just in touch with the roots of jazz, Brubeck played out last month with Ellington's *Take The A-Train*. Here's one wrinkle for whom the beat goes on.

Tomorrow's other birthdays: Janet Anderson, MP, junior minister for film and tourism, 49; Lord (Jack) Ashley, CBE, campaigner for the disabled, 78; Bill Ashton, founder-director, National Youth Jazz Orchestra, 62; Gordon Durie, footballer, 33; Wendy Ellis, ballerina, 47; Gerry Francis, football manager, 47; Jill Hammersley-Parker, table tennis player, 47; Geoff Hooper, MP, minister of state, 45; Lord (Jack) Ashley, CBE, campaigner for the disabled, 78; Bill Ashton, founder-director, National Youth Jazz Orchestra, 62; Gordon Durie, footballer, 33; Wendy Ellis, ballerina, 47; Gerry Francis, football manager, 47; Jill Hammersley-Parker, table tennis player, 47; Geoff Hooper, MP, minister of state, 45; Lord (Jack) Ashley, CBE, campaigner for the disabled, 78; Bill Ashton, founder-director, National Youth Jazz Orchestra, 62; Gordon Durie, footballer, 33; Wendy Ellis, ballerina, 47; Gerry Francis, football manager, 47; Jill Hammersley-Parker, table tennis player, 47; Geoff Hooper, MP, minister of state, 45; 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Top accountant accuses senior tax officials of 'ignoring corruption'

Inland Revenue attacked

Philip Inman

SENIOR Inland Revenue officials were severely criticised yesterday for their handling of a massive fraud that resulted in one of the tax agency's top officers going to jail for five years. Senior executives were accused of ignoring corruption and failing to put in place adequate safeguards to protect the public from rogue tax inspectors.

The accusations are contained in a letter from a senior accountant to the main parliamentary watchdog, the Public Accounts Committee, which

will question members of the Inland Revenue Board at a meeting on Monday.

The complaints are likely to concern accountants and taxpayers who face a growing number of investigations following the introduction of the new self-assessment scheme for many workers. The letter, written by John Gwyer, head of tax investigations at top accountancy firm Pannell Kerr Forster, documents a series of management failures by the Inland Revenue in the early Nineties before the trial of special compliance officer Michael Alcock.

Alcock was convicted of fraud earlier this year in a

case that proved hugely embarrassing for the Revenue. Gwyer, a former Revenue inspector, was a senior accountant at Coopers & Lybrand at the time and had several dealings with Alcock. Gwyer represented Polly Peck boss Ash Nadir, who was eventually toppled after Alcock leaked private documents to the London Stock Exchange.

Since the trial, Revenue directors have insisted that Alcock was a rogue inspector who acted without the knowledge or support of senior colleagues.

They have also claimed that independent procedures have been implemented to

safeguard the public if future complaints arise about staff. But Gwyer alleges that he and the then deputy chairman of Coopers & Lybrand, Peter Allen, wrote to Sir Anthony Batistash, then head of the Revenue, to inform him that Alcock was illegally disclosing information to the Stock Exchange. He says he also reported these allegations in person to David Hugo, then head of the Revenue's Enquiry branch and Alcock's boss.

The complaints were made in March 1990. But the Revenue told an investigating team this year from the National Audit Office, which

checks the accounts of all government departments, that suspicions about Alcock were not raised until August 1992.

Gwyer argues that the Revenue's responses to the NAO team reveals that it still wants to cover up the affair and to protect senior officers from scrutiny. The fact is that the letter in March 1990 went to the heart of Alcock's dishonest modus operandi, yet the Revenue claim, according to the NAO report, that the department suspected nothing was wrong until 1992, he says in the letter.

The underlying worry is that against a background of ever greater power devolved

to the bureaucrats and with limited checks and balances built into the system for protecting the citizen against oppressive behaviour, there may be more occurrences along Alcock-type lines.

Tory MP David Davies, who chairs the PAC, said he could not comment on the meeting or the line of questioning he planned to take, but it is understood that several members of the committee are disturbed by the allegations and will press the Revenue chairman Nick Montague to justify the agency's conduct.

A spokesman for the Revenue said: "It would not be appropriate for us to comment."

Saturday Notebook

Bank should shed secrecy



Alex Brummer

THE whole nation owes a debt of gratitude to Oskar Lafontaine. The free-thinking German finance minister put the European project back on the economic/financial map, just at the moment that it is to become important again. It is just 28 days to the official start of euro trading and the burghers of Frankfurt, the projects heartland, are becoming nervous.

The co-ordinated cut in Euro-land interest rates on Thursday was seen in some quarters as a great historical event. As the Governor of the Bank of France Jean-Claude Trichet put it the "symbolic" start of the euro. The first time that all euro-11 central banks had moved in lockstep to adjust interest rates. Perhaps. But it is not quite the triumph which Wim Duisenberg, the first president of the European Central Bank and his likely successor Trichet might have wanted. It was a move born out of weakness and misjudgment rather than strength.

Since early September, the Anglo-Saxon members of the Group of Seven have been seeking a co-ordinated interest rate cut, to ease the strain in global financial markets, arising from the emerging markets crisis. But not a bit of it. Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer and his intellectual clone at the ECB have stood steadfastly against the move despite the scale of the global crisis. Only yesterday Tietmeyer was still claiming it was wrong to fear "an overall economic crisis is looming."

It was only when the global crisis began to impinge on Germany's domestic economy, under wraps in effect a limit on the transparency which increasingly complex capital markets need to make the most rational decisions and which mathematical models need, if the standard deviations are not to prove utterly wrong.

Besides, it would be incredible *chutzpah* for the European G7 countries to insist that their developing cousins conduct monetary policy in the open, while the ECB acts like an alchemist mixing policy in a murky black pot.

The third missing element is accountability. The requirement in the US system of checks and balances and in the very different UK system of a Parliamentary democracy that central bankers are required to testify before elected representatives on monetary policy and interest rate decisions, eliminates the democratic deficit. Parliamentarians may be less sharp than they ought to be, but they represent the broader public interest. So it should be at the ECB.

That Duisenberg appears before the European Parliament is welcome enough. But as an institution to focus on the European Central Bank and its mandate. No doubt, as Duisenberg claims, the cut in short-term rates will inspire investment. It may also contribute to liquidity in global financial markets at a time

when there are renewed worries about the Brazilian government's ability to carry the fiscal elements of the IMF package. In Congress, the shape of the Russian budget and the worsening state of the Japanese economy — despite countless redaction packages.

But the exact thinking behind the Euro-land decision is shrouded in mystery. Central bankers, historically, have enjoyed a capacity to surprise. But both the Federal Reserve and latterly the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee have discovered the virtue of telegraphing their decisions.

The ECB ought to move in this direction too. If it is not to become the bogey institution of the new Europe.

There are three basic problems in the way the ECB is likely to work. Firstly, its targeting is strictly focused on price stability, bringing in inflation in the range of 2 to zero per cent. Any central bank which works simply on one-way inflation target, deprives monetary policymakers with the means to make adjustments on the grounds of employment and growth prospects.

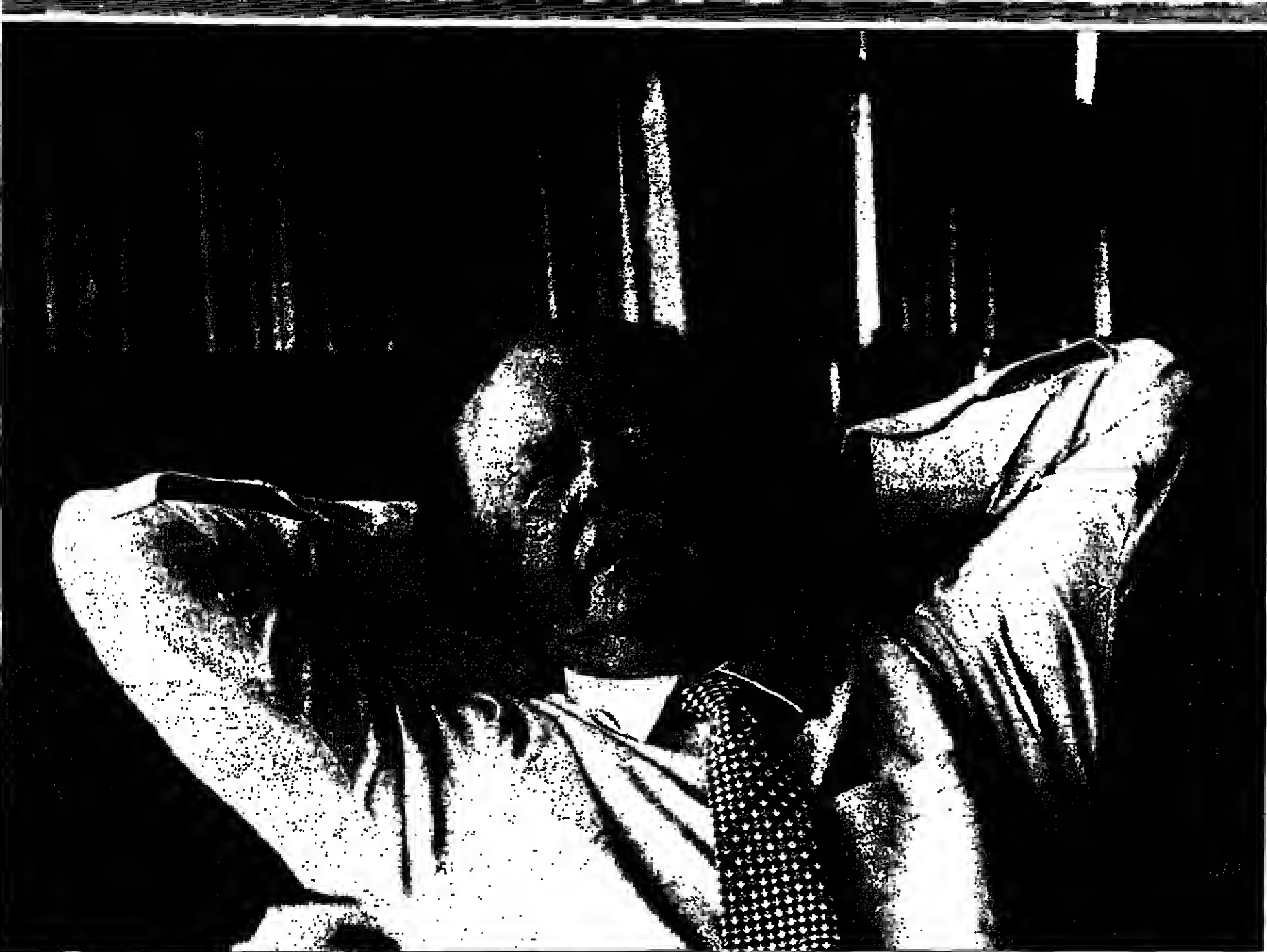
The virtue of the UK's 2.5 per cent inflation target, as explained by both the Governor of the Bank of England Eddie George and deputy Mervyn King in recent months, is that it is symmetrical. An under-shoot in a potentially deflationary period, such as we have now, is as much to be deplored and acted against, as is an overshoot.

THE second issue is transparency. We can all guess why the Bundesbank acted on Thursday, why the Italians were reluctant to go all the way and at the indicators which led the Euro-land central banks to soften their stance but we do not know. The only saving grace, perhaps, is that in a ECB of 11 national governors keeping secrets may be more difficult than in any one central bank. Keeping the deliberations under wraps is in effect a limit on the transparency which increasingly complex capital markets need to make the most rational decisions and which mathematical models need, if the standard deviations are not to prove utterly wrong.

Besides, it would be incredible *chutzpah* for the European G7 countries to insist that their developing cousins conduct monetary policy in the open, while the ECB acts like an alchemist mixing policy in a murky black pot.

The third missing element is accountability. The requirement in the US system of checks and balances and in the very different UK system of a Parliamentary democracy that central bankers are required to testify before elected representatives on monetary policy and interest rate decisions, eliminates the democratic deficit. Parliamentarians may be less sharp than they ought to be, but they represent the broader public interest. So it should be at the ECB.

That Duisenberg appears before the European Parliament is welcome enough. But as an institution to focus on the European Central Bank and its mandate. No doubt, as Duisenberg claims, the cut in short-term rates will inspire investment. It may also contribute to liquidity in global financial markets at a time



Taking it easy... but reclusive boss Garry Weston intends to stay on as chairman

PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BROWN

Time for change says ABF chief as he quits after 32 years

Roger Cowe

THE end of an era edged into view yesterday when Garry Weston, one of Britain's longest-serving but least-known bosses, announced that he was relaxing his hold on the reins of the Sunbelt and Silver Spoon food group, Associated British Foods, and stepping

ping down as chief executive. Mr Weston, whose family trusts still own just over half of the £5 billion group, has been a director since 1949, when rationing was still in force.

He became its chief executive in 1966 - the year England won the World Cup and the Beatles were going strong.

In the following year he took over the chair, and has continued to combine the two roles despite being under pressure from modern corporate governance rules not to balance the top two jobs.

But yesterday the 71-year-old magnate announced that he would cease to be chief executive on June 1 next year. He will be succeeded by Peter Jackson, who is boss of British Sugar, one of the group's key divisions.

"I have now combined the roles of chairman and chief executive for a considerable period and believe that, in recognition of the continued growth in the size and complexity of the company's operations, it is time for these changes in our management structure to be announced," he said.

But the reclusive boss will not be taking life too easy. He will continue as executive chairman of ABF - a role which was not explained yesterday but seems likely to keep him in close touch with the business.

Mr Weston is the last of the post-war generation of businessmen who built up family empires and clung on to control despite them becoming public companies.

Share price rise prompts inquiry into Vickers deal

Terry Macalister

OSLÖ stock exchange has launched an investigation into possible insider dealing involving the £304 million takeover by Vickers of Ulstein Holding. The inquiry follows a 98% rise in the Ulstein share price before the Norwegian marine engineering firm's shares were suspended on Monday of last week.

The British company, which manufactures a range of heavy engineering from propellers to tanks, confirmed this week that it planned to buy all of Ulstein - bar its shipbuilding interest - in a move that would create the world's leading ship propulsion company.

Officials are talking to Ulstein about which of its staff were aware of the Vickers deal and who may have bought and sold shares in the days before the suspension. Bert Bangstad, an Oslo stock exchange spokesman said: "Findings will be passed on to the Banking Insurance and Securities Commission of Norway, which has the power to decide whether or not to press charges."

Mr Bangstad said yesterday

that the sudden increase in share price and volume of shares traded made the case an obvious one to be investigated. "This is a routine inquiry that we make whenever there are major share price movements ahead of an official announcement."

The Ulstein stock was suspended after the share price had gone up from a 50-week low of 68 Norwegian krona (55.70) to 96 krona. Vickers group has agreed to pay 175 krona a share to take over Ulstein Holding, valuing the deal at over £300 million. The Ulstein family controls 60 per cent of the company shares and will receive £183 million for its stake.

The deal between Vickers and Ulstein still needs shareholder and regulatory approval but both are expected to be forthcoming, despite analysts arguing that Vickers has paid "a full price". Vickers-Ulstein Marine, as the new business will be called, is to be headed by Ulstein chief executive Baard Mikkelsen. Vickers is expected to obtain cost-savings of around £10 million in the year 2000 and at least £15 million by 2002 from the combined venture.

Quota cheats have Opec over a barrel

Dan Atkinson

THE nightmarish prospect of a worldwide scramble to pump more oil into glutted energy markets was raised last night as it emerged that members of the petroleum cartel, Opec, were already cheating on nearly a quarter of the current feeble package of production cuts. As the price per barrel continued to languish at levels not seen since the 1980s, the once-feared organisation seemed to be on the brink of disintegration.

The president of Opec, Yousef Yousef, described the price collapse as catastrophic, while Kuwait's oil minister,

Sheikh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, told the country's news agency that Opec's supposed 2.6-million-barrel-per-day production cut was actually closer to two million barrels. The information service Bloomberg named Iran and Venezuela as chief culprits in the quota cheating, while analysts feared that when current production problems in Nigeria were sorted out, that country would return to its habit of shipping much more oil than it is allowed to under Opec rules.

Last month, Opec failed to agree a further package of cuts after Saudi Arabia, traditional leader of the oil bloc, refused to contemplate further restrictions. Saudi Arabia is thought to fear loss of market share and customers.

Crude oil - the benchmark North Sea price for January delivery stood at \$10.25 a barrel, up just 0.07 cents on Thursday. At such levels, some analysts fear the next move may be into single figures.

The havoc wreaked by falling oil prices on Opec economies was highlighted yesterday by news that the Saudi Arabian government is considering having to borrow from banks or international money markets for the first time.

Already, it was reported, the Saudis have had to borrow

\$5 billion from the United Arab Emirates. As the world's biggest oil exporter, Saudi Arabia relies on oil revenue for 70 per cent of government funding.

Yesterday, Mr Yousef said of the dive in prices from a high of \$25 a barrel last year to about \$10 now: "This is an economic catastrophe for exporting countries."

With the existing Opec cuts package under pressure due to cheating, the cartel could effectively cease to function if all members lose faith in the quota regime and a free-for-all develops. Only a bitterly cold winter in Europe and North America seems likely to arrest oil prices.

President Clinton welcomed the jobs numbers, saying: "I feel great about the overall economic news." But he added: "We have more to do here at home, and more to do to stabilise the global economy, if we expect economic growth to continue."

Since March, US manufacturing has shed 245,000 jobs. Hardest hit have been factories producing industrial machinery, clothing and textiles, electronic equipment, primary metals such as steel, transportation equipment and fabricated metals.

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Coral race favourite is the Tote

Roger Cowe

THE race for the Coral chain of bookmakers reached the finishing line last night when the deadline for bids passed - but the winner will not be known for several weeks.

The state-owned Tote is favourite to buy Coral from Ladbrokes, which was forced to sell by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Ladbrokes bought Coral from Bass at the start of the year, but the MMC ruled that a combination of the number one and three chains would be too powerful.

The group is expected to fetch more than £300 million, but there is doubt over whether Ladbrokes will re-comp the £376 million it paid Bass - despite strong competition to buy the 800-plus bookmaker chain.

The Tote has been able to raise backing from venture capitalists, believed to be Cadover and Electra Fleming. Competition has come from other venture capitalists attracted by the group's strong cashflow.

The Tote has emerged as favourite because the downturn in financial markets has made it more difficult to assemble a financial bid.

Halifax buys into Lex

Nicholas Bannister, Chief Business Correspondent

HALIFAX, the building society turned bank, yesterday dipped into its £3 billion war chest to buy a half share in Lex Service's vehicle leasing business for £177.5 million.

The company played down reports that it was considering a merger with another high-street bank. City institutions have been pushing for coming chief executive James Crosby to do a big deal, possibly with Barclays.

Sources within Halifax believe there are inadequate benefits to justify such a merger. They confirmed the company was searching for acquisitions, but more in the life and personal health insurance areas.

Halifax is paying £182.5 million for a half share in Lex Vehicle Leasing, with a further £15 million payable in 2002 if the company gets good second-hand prices for vehicles in its fleet. There are fears that the switch to twice-yearly changes to the year letter on number plates may undermine second-hand values.

Lex Vehicle Leasing, the market leader in the UK with a fleet of 98,000 vehicles, believes the link with the Halifax will give it access to a broader market.



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Finance Guardian

Here comes the pain again

Roger Cowe asks why the retail downturn has surprised the City

WHEN Rod Elsievier warned on Thursday that its profits this year will be lower than expected, the Anglo-Dutch publisher became the latest in a long line of leading companies to dash investors' expectations.

Only this week, companies as diverse as Arcadia — the former Burton group — Hornby Toys and the chemical company Elementis have been forced to issue official warnings through the Stock Exchange, telling disappointed investors that times are

tougher than anybody realised, and profits will therefore suffer. Harveys, Marks & Spencer and cable company BICC are among other eminent corporate names which appear somewhat less eminent than they did at the start of the autumn, but the trickle of warnings a few months ago is now threatening to become a torrent.

The poorer prospects will mean job losses as businesses trim their operations to match harder times. There will also be an impact on stock market confidence, which appeared to have recovered from the summer plunge only to be threat-

ened again as hopes of business improvement turn out to be over-inflated.

Profit warnings represent a double whammy for share prices, which rely on expectations of future performance rather than evidence of past endeavours. The spate of surprises over the past few months suggests not only that the economy is sliding rapidly towards a slump but also that stock market experts have been wildly over-optimistic for some time.

If that proves to be the case, the consequences can only be a sustained slide in share prices — which could add to prob-

lems emerging in the real economy if it further depresses consumer confidence.

When a company issues a warning about its profit prospects, it is more than a mere courtesy. Such statements are not bandied about lightly. Public companies are required by Stock Exchange rules to keep investors informed of all the relevant information that might affect their share price. The aim is to ensure that everybody is up to speed, preventing some shareholders getting inside information that gives them an advantage over others.

Directors know that finan-

cial institutions do not like such surprises. They spend a lot of their own time and employ highly-paid investor relations specialists to try to ensure that the City has a good idea of what profits are going to be.

So boards submit to the embarrassment of a public profit warning only in extreme circumstances. They know the City's reaction will be not only to sharply mark down their shares but also to question the company's reputation and prospects. The impact of an unpleasant shock can damage a company for years in the eyes of City analysts.

The impact on some of these companies' share prices has been dramatic. For example, Arcadia's shares fell by more than a quarter on Wednesday, wiping £141 million off the group's stock market value. When Marks & Spencer shocked the City with poor half-year figures and a warning that worse was to come in what Sir Richard Greenbury described as a "bloodbath" on the high street, the retail giant suffered a £1 billion stock market hit.

Many of the shocks have come from retailers — which demonstrates the suddenness of the fall in consumer spending since the summer.

After a summer disrupted by the World Cup and miserable weather, there seemed every reason to suppose that the high street could look forward to a buoyant autumn. The comparisons with last year were auspicious, since last autumn was hit by the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, and by warm weather which discouraged shoppers from buying winter clothes.

This autumn, the weather has been much kinder to retailers, apart from a few rainy Saturdays. Yet sales in September failed to lift off after the holidays, and the picture has worsened since then.

Most retailers are mystified by shoppers' sudden reluctance to spend. But they have no time to sit around

analysing their motivation. Instead, they have had to set about slashing prices in an attempt to avoid being left with mountains of stock after Christmas which can only be sold by slashing prices even further.

But retailers are not the only businesses suffering this autumn. The malaise extends across all industry sectors, even the supposedly recession-proof software industry.

The high pound is still making life difficult for many British companies. Exporters are hit directly because their sterling prices are much less competitive than when the currency was lower. They have two choices — to cut their prices or to lose sales,

neither of which are very comfortable options.

In some cases, the damage has finally impacted from the collapse of Asian economies last year. Chemical company Elementis, for example, warned this week that its sales had been hit by lower demand from Asia. But the group, whose interests include the animal feed company BOCM Paul, also said it was suffering from poor agricultural demand.

The Asian crisis may also be making itself felt indirectly. Several profit warnings stem from a downturn in the United States. Indeed, the phenomenon is also being seen among US companies, as it is on the Continent. US business

may at last be showing the impact of lower Asian demand. But whether it is Asia or the pound at the root of many UK companies' troubles, the question really is why it has been such a surprise. After all, neither are new phenomena. The scale of their impact may have been difficult to judge but their existence has been apparent for all to see for more than 12 months.

The answer seems to be that businesses and the City have been skating on rapidly melting ice throughout the year, hoping against hope that the UK would largely be insulated from the ravages of sterling's strength, saved by the series of interest rate cuts which began in the autumn.

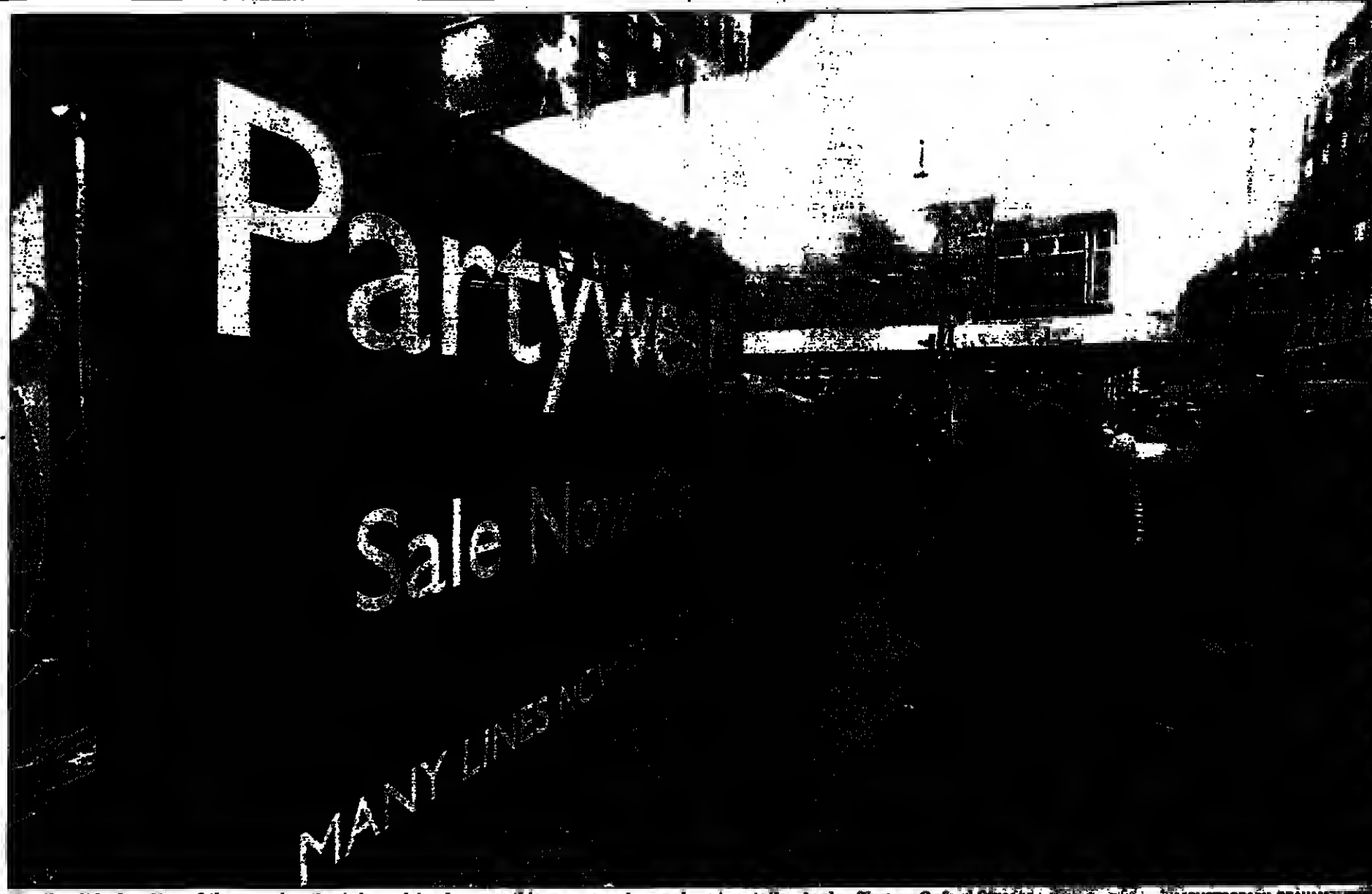
The Bank of England is expected to keep interest rates coming down, following the lead this week of the Eurozone countries. But that hope seems a pretty feeble excuse for the sustained level of share prices.

Bob Semple, the experienced stock market strategist at BT Alex Brown, has admitted that analysts have been refusing to face up to the prospect of sliding profits next year — which current prices are supposed to reflect.

Writing in his latest analysis, which was published yesterday, Mr Semple says: "We are suspicious about the prospects for economic growth, and are even more concerned about the outlook for corporate profits."

He says the firm's forecasts already predict that corporate profits will fall next year. But even with that grim expectation in mind, he believes his analysts' forecasts are still "fairly high".

Such expectations should ensure that profit surprises continue. While analysts might expect every British company to do its duty they seem to have clapped their telescopes to their blind eyes.



Whether it is the effect of the pound or the Asian crisis, shoppers this year seem impervious to retailers' sale offers on Oxford Street

PHOTOGRAPH BY GIANFRANCO

Profit warnings this autumn

Date	Company	Warning	Impact
Nov 10	Chemical	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 10%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%
Nov 10	Booker	Warning of lower profits	Share price down 15%

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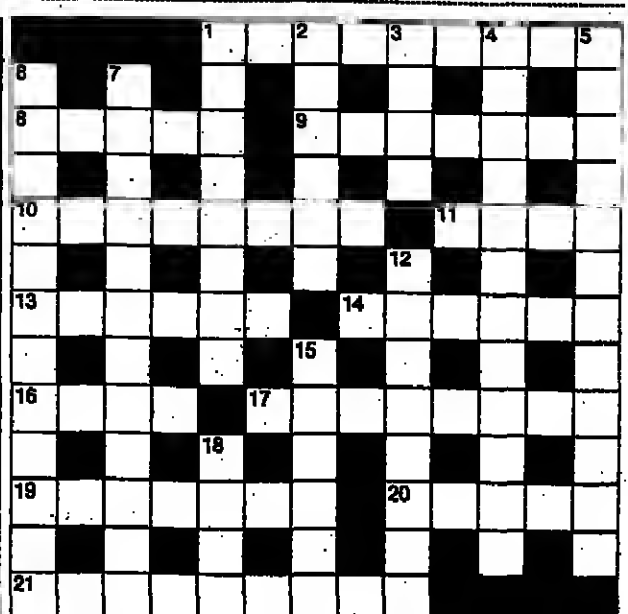
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E T E R N I T Y S T A Y

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11 Republic of 844 islands (4)
13 Large, stinging insect (5)
14 Slightly open (4)
17 Armoured glove (5)

19 Examining rubbish for useful items (7)
20 Garret (5)
21 Blown up (5)
Down
1 Animal with long, sticky tongue (8)
2 Voucher entitling entry (6)
3 Smooth and level — place to live (4)
4 Friendship, gaiety (12)
5 Locomotives, carriages etc (7,5)
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saturday

Guardian

review

Saturday December 5 1998



Play up, play up and play the game... maybe your sport puts you in your place more than your work

Do the new social groupings, announced this week, define British society? **David Cannadine** thinks they are so obsessed with what people do, that they cannot really tell us who we are

Classified information

This week the Office for National Statistics told us that the six classifications used in every census since 1911 will be changed, and that eight new categories will be introduced in 2001. The explanation is that Britain's social structure is changing fast, and that the social categories have to be modified to keep pace. So some peers will in future be ranked below secretaries, footballers and air-stewaresses, while celebrity chefs will appear in the highest echelon.

Teachers and policemen will share the same social class as lawyers and doctors, while the most typical working-class job will be a cleaner rather than a coal miner. These new occupational groupings, so we are told, provide a more resonant and realistic picture of Tony Blair's Britain. Never mind how our society was: this is how our society now is. New Labour: new census categories.

Perhaps so; but perhaps not. Already, some journalists have had a great deal of fun with these proposals, and it is easy to see why. There are more than 20 million adults in Britain, and the idea that they can all be put in eight occupational categories is, to put it at its

politest, a heroic over-simplification. Do all celebrity chefs feel they belong in the same kitchen?

Compare Ruthie Rogers (American, married to a life peer) with Marco Pierre White (English, of humble beginnings) and some indication of the problems begins to emerge. For if the small number of famous foodies are a diverse bunch, then what of the thousands of people who are being herded together in these very coarse collective categories? It is instructive to recall one of Margaret Thatcher's most famous (or notorious) remarks. There was, she insisted, "no such thing as society": only families and individuals. Thus regarded, "society" is no more than a set of crude collective identities mistakenly wished on individuals — as in these census categories.

Nor is this the only difficulty with this latest scheme of social classification. For they are all constructed on the basis of occupation and working conditions. Yet if or when we think of ourselves as belonging to collective groups, do we do so primarily or exclusively on the basis of incomes and types of work? This is what Adam Smith and Karl Marx believed: that occupation, or relation to the means of production, was the key influence in constitut-

ing social structures and in forming social identities. But even in the 18th and 19th centuries, there was more to social life and identities than work, and now many people have multiple jobs — or no jobs at all. How are such people to be classified in the work-obsessed census, and what would such classification tell us about their place in the social structure, or their sense of that structure? This stress on people as producers ignores their behaviour as consumers: for many people, their sense of social identity is much more determined by how they spend their money than by how they earn it. But no census categories have ever been devised which take adequate account of this.

Another problem is that Professor David Rose, the inventor of these new categories, has also been quoted as saying that, unlike those which they replace, there is nothing hierarchical about them — which presumably means that he thinks they are free of any connotations of superiority or inferiority. Who is he trying to kid?

At the top are those who are rich and successful; at the bottom are those who are neither; and in between there is a definite and discernible downward declension. If this is not a hierarchical image of

society, then it is difficult to know what would be. Eight layers, from the top to the bottom: this recalls the many efforts that have been made to describe the structure of English (or British) society from the 17th century statistician Gregory King's suggestion of 26 categories and the novelist Daniel Defoe's suggestion that there were seven. These, too, were hierarchical visions: even if they could not agree precisely how many layers and ranks there were.

One senses that Professor Rose shares this uncertainty as to how British society might best be described. For having set out in elaborate detail these carefully defined categories, he then suggests another way of seeing which implicitly subverts the scheme he has proposed. For he has been quoted as saying that our social structure may be straightforwardly divided into two groups: crudely put, Britons are either middle class or working class. If we cut the sociological complexities, he seems to be implying, then we end up with some old enemies and familiar friends: "us" and "them", shop floor and boardroom, proletariat and bourgeoisie, men and officers, state school or public school. It is the recognition of that great

divide, and of the two great collective groups on either side of it, Rose seems to be suggesting, which constitutes a more resonant way of understanding our social world than the alternative schemes he has proposed.

But is it? Once again, things are not so simple. In part this is because the antagonistic groups just enumerated constitute very different (and very differently divided) collectivities. Many company directors may have gone to public school, but a good many have not. The same may be said of army officers. Many people of relatively humble backgrounds attend state schools, then go on to Oxford or Cambridge, and cross this supposedly unbridgeable divide.

Nor are these the only problems

It's an over-simplification. Do all celebrity chefs feel they belong in the same kitchen?

with this polarised picture of our society. For it can be argued that it is constructed around completely the wrong sociological antithesis. After all, the Queen's Speech recently informed us that the hereditary nobility will shortly disappear from the upper house, bowing to the will of the electorate. Here is an alternative dichotomy, of "peers versus people", which has resonated in Britain since before the days of Gladstone and Lloyd George: and this presents a very different view of social divisions from that of workers versus employers. There are many different points at which a line may be drawn between one collective group and another: and all of them are over-simplifications.

Many people prefer to think of British society in triadic terms: as divided between the upper, middle and lower classes — an image projected by Ronnie Corbett, Ronnie Barker and John Cleese in a 1967 sketch which perfectly caught these three social types: the cloth-capped worker, the tribby-hatted manager, and the bowler-hatted toff. To see our society divided into three social groups is a more nuanced way than to see it as divided into two. But it still greatly over-simplifies. Are shopkeepers middle class or work-

ing class? Is Lord Archer middle or upper class — or working class? It is difficult to say.

Perhaps this is why many people prefer to give up on collective categories altogether — be they two or three (or eight) — and to insist, instead, that British society should properly be understood in terms of individuals, and their specific relations to each other (back to Thatcher again). Here is the ultimate extension of the notion of hierarchy, and it can be seen in the elaborate tables of precedence which still grace Burke's and Debutts's Peerages, which explain whether a Master of Arts in the University of Oxford ranks higher than a provincial mayor with no university degree.

This picture of society has recently been dramatically represented (or mis-represented) in the State Opening of Parliament: from the gorgeously appraised monarch, via the five grades of the peerage, splendidly but differentially costumed, on to the life peers, and down to the undifferentiated Commons. To its critics, this is pure make-believe — a Gilbert-and-Sullivan operetta rather than a realistic image of British society.

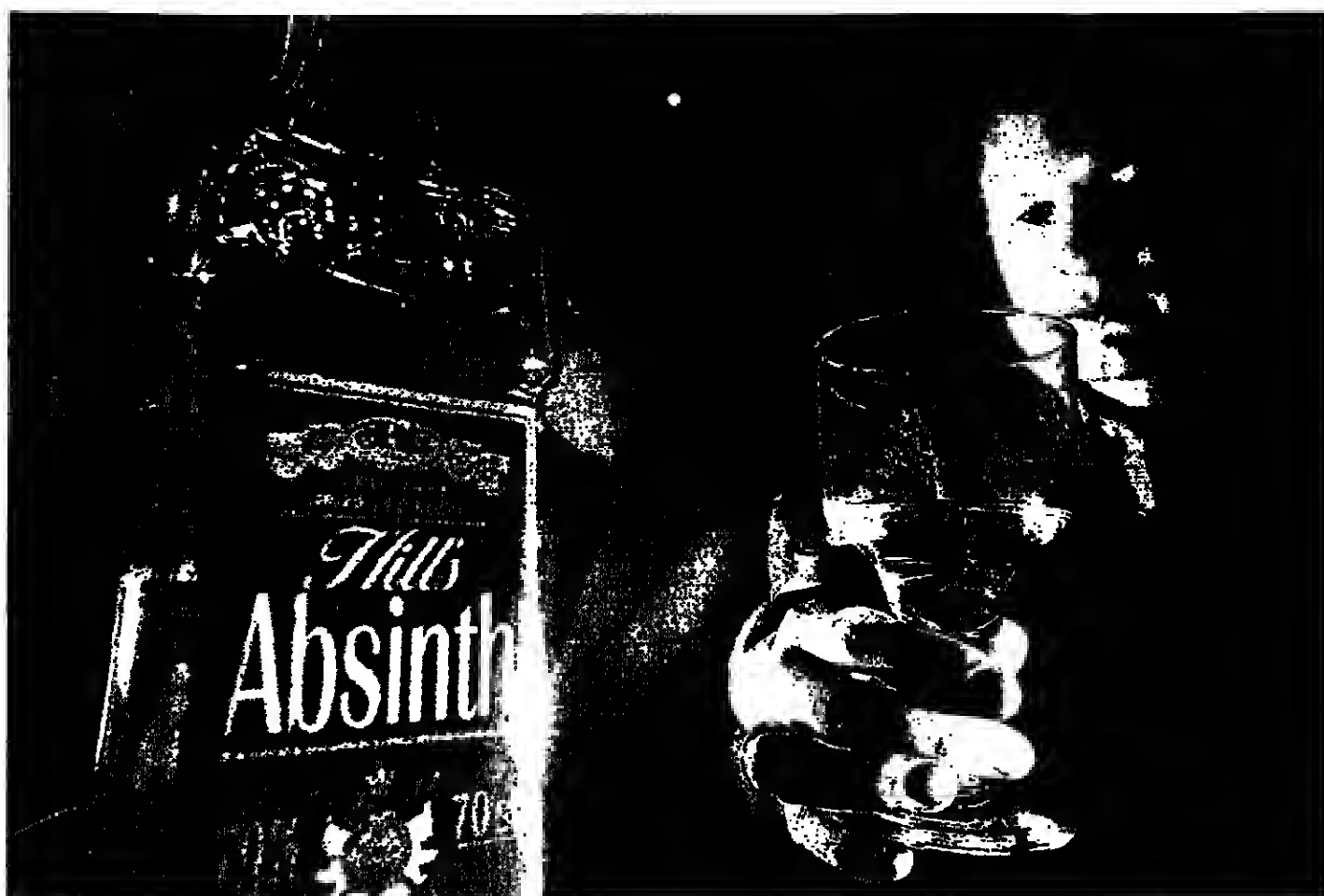
For the impression conveyed is that the monarch is the page 14

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Will absinthe make the heart grow fonder or just put us in the A&E wards?

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM TURNER

Should we allow absinthe back into Britain?

Yes No

Ben Reed
Bar ManagerCaroline Bradley
Information
Officer

Dear Ben,
In my job at Alcohol Concern, there are certain topics that come around like clockwork. One is people asking, in awed tones, about absinthe. Is it true that it's illegal? Can it really send you mad? Blind?

Absinthe is an extremely alcoholic, emerald-green, bitter-tasting drink. It was popular in the 19th century and is linked with artists and intellectuals. Because of its bitterness, absinthe was not drunk straight from a glass; it had a complex, ritualistic method of imbibing with spoons, sugar and ignition of the drink itself. Regular or excessive use was believed to produce a syndrome called absinthism, whose symptoms were addiction, hyperexcitability and hallucinations. Absinthe is banned in a number of countries.

It's not at all surprising that the company which discovered that it was never formally prohibited in this country has decided to import it. It needs only to identify its markets and tap into absinthe's mystique and shadowy reputation for sure-fire commercial success.

At 70 per cent alcohol by volume, a double absinthe contains the government's daily recommended limit of alcohol for men and is in excess of the recommended limit for women. With one in every four male general hospital beds in this country occupied by someone whose health has been affected by alcohol, my response to the news that absinthe is on its way back to the UK is: who needs it?

Yours sincerely,
Caroline Bradley,
Information Officer,
Alcohol Concern

Dear Caroline,
In my capacity as a bar manager I see many hugely hyped, over-marketed novelty products appear, mostly with few or no repercussions. In absinthe we have a quality product that has withstood the test of time, with a history steeped in colourful myth and tradition. So why all the hoo-ha, Mr Bradley? I stock overproof rums and vodkas that have never merited this great

a commotion. I've drunk mezzals in Mexico that if imbibed regularly and excessively would have elicited addictive hyperexcitable and hallucinatory reactions. So why?

The simple truth, as you proclaim, is that absinthe is a marketer's dream; bringing a formerly banned substance into the country is seen as akin to smuggling cannabis. But why was it banned? Explaining this might go some way to exposing the myth behind the drink. The facts are not as glamorous as the hype suggests; absinthe wasn't banned for being an integral prop in a devil-worship ring, nor was it, as the leftwing press in the late 19th century proclaimed, a drink devised by Jews to destroy France.

Rather, by the turn of the century, it had become the staple diet throughout Europe and in a time of pre-first world war jitters, artists, aristocrats and the working man alike were just a little too fond of the "Fée Verte". The only solution was to outlaw it. With no world wars imminent and with absinthe now being sold in controlled drinking environments, I think England can handle its re-emergence.

You ask who needs it? No one needs it, but for those who fancy trying it, it's available at my bar as of next week (with a hospital bed booked in advance).

Yours sincerely,
Ben Reed,
Manager, The Met Bar,
Metropolitan Hotel,
London

Dear Ben,
I think we're agreed that the hoo-ha is because of absinthe's colourful past. The reason why there has never been this level of commotion about overproof rums and vodkas is because they lack absinthe's mythology. All of its appeal is tied up in the fact that it represents the meeting point between madness, degeneracy and artistic genius.

Its supposed hallucinatory properties are because it contains thujone, which is thought to work on the brain in the same way cannabis does. In reality there is

little good data to suggest that absinthe's active components are anything other than alcohol.

The symptoms of absinthism are strangely similar to those experienced by dependent drinkers. Whatever the biological facts, the bulk of its appeal is that it may send you decadently mad.

We advocate sensible drinking because alcohol can affect short- and long-term health and behaviour. Absinthe is not a drink to be used sensibly; the culture that surrounds it is one of excess. Marketing it as an exclusive and potent way of celebrating the millennium will just add to the burden on casualty departments, already coping with up to eight out of 10 visitors at peak times because of alcohol.

Ultimately, with its newly clarified legal status, the decision about whether to drink it or not is up to individuals, fully informed by clear labelling and served by well-trained staff. I just can't help thinking that the truly talented would leave it alone.

Yours,
Caroline

Dear Caroline,
I am sure that whatever is decided in this debate, most readers are anxious to try it, particularly when it has the qualities mentioned already (so we've done our bit to add to the already potent marketability of the product).

And whatever was wrong with the occasional bout of decadent madness, I am forced to witness this (under duress of course) at the Met. Surely, Ms B, you can't believe the re-emergence of absinthe will lead to the flooding of A&E wards across the country with thujone-overdosing geniuses?

As an occasional insensible drinker myself, I recognise the consequences of over-abuse of alcohol on the wider community but campaigners should incline their efforts towards concern for the non-controlled environment of under-age drinkers.

And here is where absinthe sits on safer ground. There are countless products on the market specifically manufactured and packaged for the younger market. Anything from salt to cigarettes to red meat carries a health warning. It is the consumers who have to decide which to heed and which to ignore.

But there are other fall-falls; as a bar manager I am required by law not to serve alcohol to any customer deemed inebriated, and since absinthe is only to be sold directly on licensed premises, its potential for serious damage is reined in and is therefore no more

real than that of any other strong liquor or spirit.

Yours,
Ben

Dear Ben,
Your optimism is touching. If only you were right and every on-licensed premise was well-managed. The A&E figures plus the vomit stains that litter the streets of most towns and cities suggest otherwise. Young people drink because they want to sample the adult world and look more grown-up. I don't know about you, but "do as I say and not as I do" wasn't a convincing argument when I was a teenager.

I can't help looking at the bigger picture, at the substance, the setting and the culture. From this viewpoint, the obvious conclusion is that we could all do with having a more grown-up attitude to alcohol.

In your first letter, you suggested that explaining why absinthe was originally banned might help to demystify it. It was banned in France because of its pernicious effect on the nation's health.

Alcohol-related harm comes from intoxication, regularly drinking to excess, or both.

At £40 a bottle I'm not suggesting that history will repeat itself, but with deaths related to alcohol estimated at 33,000 a year, it's hard to see how a drink of this strength will have a positive impact.

Cheers,
Caroline

Dear Caroline,
I think we have deviated somewhat from our original topic — of course any discussion on a specific will always be engulfed by the bigger picture.

The remains of a bad night will always litter the streets the morning after; the question here is what elicited those adverse reactions? Certainly excessive drinking, but of what? Absinthe will not become England's staple liquid diet and bring the country to her knees as it has a sophisticated taste that will never endear itself to the stereotypical English drinker. As you say, the cost alone will deter most of us.

This is precisely the reason why absinthe has been marketed at and supplied to a handful of establishments whose clientele are a little more discerning (albeit not on Thursday night). It is for those who have an interest in fine spirits and rare liquors to enjoy.

Yours,
Ben

Smallweed



The composer Offenbach had a friend who was a comedian. This friend called most days at Offenbach's house. One day when he knocked on the door and asked to see the composer, he was told he could not, as Offenbach had died during the night. It was all quite gentle and peaceful, they told him. He would have known nothing. Oh dear, the comedian said, I'm terribly sorry — but wouldn't he be surprised when he finds out!

A pedant writes: Why precisely are you telling us this? Smallweed mustily responds: Because I heard this tale on Radio 3 on Wednesday and for reasons I can't comprehend, it has been wandering in and out of my head ever since.

And now, a foaming complaint about the same institution. At the end of the Perth debacle, some kind person, Jonathan Agnew perhaps, invited me, along with a few million others, to tune in again for the next encounter at Adelaide. Having had several days to digest this request, here is my answer: I shall, but on one condition — which is that Test Match Special resumes its ancient practice, tedious for them but essential for us, of regularly reading the scorecard, so that those switching on in the early hours of the morning are swiftly told exactly what has been happening.

And by reading the scorecard I don't mean the kind of slovenly

practice now creeping in, where the commentator merely tells us that Slater was out for 202, Langer for nine, and Taylor for 203, and Ramprakash took two of the wickets. I mean the full scorecard, which says how each wicket fell, what the score was at the time, and just how much damage each of our bowlers has taken.

May I say while I'm on this subject how much better the programme is now for the absence of cake (unless of course they've been talking of cake while Smallweed was slumbering.)

Or is this my only complaint this week against John Birt and his multi-minions. At the time of writing the BBC is still referring to the world's most famous senator as Pin O'Shea, as if he were some Irish adventurer.

No doubt the pronunciation unit has issued one of its edicts saying the name rhymes with toupee. (I was going to cite either ricochet or tourniquet; but my dictionary says these can be pronounced either way.) Meanwhile, all Chileans interviewed, and most Spaniards, pronounce it as if it were spelled Pino-chette, making it rhyme with Exocet.

Ludicrous interviews then take place in which the BBC's man in London says it one way and his interlocutor in Santiago says it the other. If the senator calls it Pinochette, and they call it Pinochette, why don't we? Typical cultural imperialism. I shudder to think what will happen if the British courts follow BBC practice.

My discussion of the longest words in the language has now reached a point where a reader asserts that the longest word in the language is smiles, because it's a mile between... but you've got the point already. Another letter rebukes me for not knowing that the longest word is floccinaucinihilipilification. Funny

thing, that. I thought I'd covered the point by saying at the outset of this controversy that some people believed the longest word in the language was floccinaucinihilipilification, but that Smallweed, following Chambers as always, took this to be a mere facetious invention.

Any day now I expect to see pickets outside the Guardian building carrying placards inscribed with the slogan: "No vilification of Floccinaucinihilipilification".

For anyone minded to visit me on such an errand, the Guardian's new address is Lee Floe no 32, the Arctic Circle, near Nordaustrundingen, near Greenland. Don't forget to wrap up warm! I would love to give you the name of the nearest station, but I fear I'm not that au fait with the Greenland railway system.

Edward Mason of Barnard Castle, meanwhile, has challenged David Peers's submission of hyperpolymorphonucleoneutrophilgranulocytæmia, on the grounds that the first e in nucleos should not be there. This reduces the word to 47 letters, which makes it no longer than pneumosomething or other, as quoted last week, in its plural form.

On the other hand, he suspects that by adding mato between granulo and cytæmia, you could get Peers's word up to 51.

It would thus dead heat with a word nominated by Mike Nimmin: osseocarnisanguineovisceritartaricarnivomediary. This correspondence must now cease; unless, of course, it needs to continue.

*This column, I'd like to point out, is now written on Thursdays. This is why the other Saturday I predicted the fall of Newt Gingrich, an event which had taken place by the time the prediction appeared. I need to point this out, too, to those kind people who ring me with spilling information, whereas I joke on Fridays, when it's too late.

The Readers' Editor on... an inappropriate response Aggravated injury

Ian Mayes
Open door



This week I have been considering a complaint about an article which appeared on the women's pages on Thursday last week (November 26) under the heading Members only. It posed the following question with reference to a case that was being heard in the High Court: If you destroy the penis, do you destroy the man? Alongside the article there was an uncaptioned photograph, running the entire depth of the tabloid page, of a classical ruin, showing a naked man leaning against a broken column.

Inset beside this was a photograph of the man who had brought the High Court action — which was continuing at the time of publication — James Williams. There was a subheading, quoting from the article, which said: "It is implicitly understood that a stiff prick signifies male power over women ('Give her one, did you?') while the limp dick is the ultimate mark of masculine failure."

In the High Court, Mr Williams was suing the surgeon who in carrying out an operation at the base of his penis had left him with injuries which led to a further series of operations, including skin grafts and the graft of an artery. Mr Williams, who still suffers the physical effects of his injuries, had become seriously depressed. He lost his job as an airline pilot. He is separated from his wife and rarely sees his children. He has no perma-

nent home and lives with a succession of friends and relatives.

The Guardian article, which sought to use Mr Williams's case as the topical peg for a generalised discussion of man's relationship with his penis — a defining relationship, it suggested, in terms of male identity — began by outlining Mr Williams's plight, taking the details from court reports already published, and concluded this preamble with: But whatever the outcome of the case, the underlying message already seems clear: destroy the penis and you destroy the man.

The writer says his intended reading of this would place the following emphasis: "the underlying message [from Mr Williams] already seems clear: destroy the penis and you destroy the man."

The women's editor who commissioned the piece says she was struck by a remark attributed to the judge in which he said that the case had exposed Mr Williams to an examination in court, I paraphrase, such as few had experienced in history. She said, "Like many women, I was struck by the judge's seeming ignorance of the ordeal suffered by hundreds of women every year who have to give and/or listen to evidence about the state of their vaginas after rape, and of the pain and humiliation suffered, only weeks before, by the victims of the gynaecologist, Rodney Ledward, known as 'the Butcher' [Ledward struck off after leaving many of his patients mutilated, infertile and in pain]."

A paragraph to this effect, included in the original piece, was — lamentably perhaps, since it suggested a reason for it — cut out when the article needed to be shortened for publication.

Mr Williams objects to what he sees as his misappropriation by the paper to lend topicality to an argument which, he insists, completely misses the point of the case. He repeats what he said in court, that he wished the case to be heard publicly because he was determined

that what had happened to him would happen to no one else.

He had said in court that an important part of his life, including his sex life, had been taken from him. To use this as justification for the suggestion that he had been destroyed as a man he found wrong and extremely offensive. Had he been destroyed as a man, he said, he would not have submitted himself to the ordeal of the court case.

On the day that the Guardian article appeared, Mr Williams decided that he could not continue with the court case, which he found too distressing and traumatic. There is no suggestion that the events are linked. He accepted a settlement of something more than £800,000. He says he strongly disputes the account of his treatment that had emerged up to that point and now intends to attempt to put over his side.

In my opinion Mr Williams has a legitimate complaint against the paper, at the very least on the grounds of insensitivity. It might have been anticipated that a person in the midst of the ordeal which Mr Williams was even then undergoing would not find his distress lightened by such a piece, or the way it was presented. We have, without intending to, made a contribution to his distress.

The kind of reactive journalism of which this is an example is common in the Guardian as it is in other papers. We need — and I think the writer of the piece would agree — to ask ourselves whether it is attached to an event at the centre of which is an innocent person. One question might be: Is the issue we wish to discuss of such urgency that any risk of causing further injury is worth taking? In this case it was not and we are sorry for the aggravation.

Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephone on 0171 238 9588 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 238 9587. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Classified information

4 page 13 most important person, followed by the hereditary peerage, with the (aptly-named) Commons the most inferior. But this is not really how things are. No sovereign in 200 years has vetoed a parliamentary bill; the powers of the Lords, recent events notwithstanding, are very limited; and the Commons, representing the people, is incomparably the most important element.

It is this misrepresentation which underlies the recent criticism of the State Opening as a mere pantomime performance: that it presents an image of society almost completely at variance with how it actually is. To those who still defend the individualistic and traditional hierarchy as the best of all possible social worlds, the pageant of the State Opening presents an image of society as it is and as it



No longer only for the nobles... how do you classify Harrods now?

should (indeed, must) remain. As these perceptions and opinions suggest, there is no single, authoritative, universally-accepted and all-encompassing way of seeing society: there are different visions, from different perspectives, each of which offers at best only an approximation of the truth. Society as collective "us" versus

collective "them", society as upper-middle and lower groupings, society as the seamless web of individual hierarchy extending from the sovereign to the scullery-maid: these are the ways in which most Britons view their social world and their own place within it, and it is difficult to see how the new categories of the census are an

improvement on them, or will significantly alter them.

From this perspective, class — or what we delight in calling, with such ignorant knowingsness, the "class system" — is not so much an objective thing. It is the subjective way we make sense of the social structure as we see it and to which we belong. Nor is "class" the explanation for (or the same thing as) inequality or lack of opportunity. Britain, it is important to remember (but easy to forget), is far from being the most unequal society in the world, and social mobility here is not significantly different from many other western nations.

Class in Britain is the way we think about and describe those inequalities. It is, essentially, what culture does to social structure: it renders the millions of people who inhabit our nation comprehensible, by arranging them in oversimplified collectivities or in no less oversimplified hierarchies. Across the centuries, these have been, for most Britons, very powerful and very pervasive images.

But as befits its born-again ideology, New Labour is unhappy with them, even as it has yet to make good its escape from them. It is hostile to the hierarchical vision of British society; hence Gordon Brown's preference for a business suit over tie and tails, the Lord Chancellor's desire to be rid of his breeches, and the Cabinet's desire

to be rid of the hereditary peers. But it is also, as a post-socialist, post-class-war party, no less hostile to the collective vision of British society, whether as "us" and "them", or as upper-middle-lower.

The challenge New Labour faces is to evolve a more positive, more creative, more resonant vision of our social structure for

our own times which goes beyond the vague bromides of "community". This is a difficult and demanding task, in which the new census scheme for social classification is unlikely to be of help.

David Cannadine is director of the Institute of Historical Research, His recent book, *Class in Britain*, is published by Yale University Press.

Where you are in the new social order

1. Higher managerial and professional occupations
2. Lower managerial and professional occupations
3. Intermediate occupations
4. Small employers and own account workers

5. Publicans, Play group leaders, Farmers, Taxi drivers, Window cleaners, Painters and decorators
6. Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations
7. Routine occupations
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed

9. Shop assistants, Traffic wardens, Cooks, Bus drivers, Hairdressers, Postal workers
10. Writers, Road sweepers, Cleaners, Couriers, Building labourers, Refuse collectors
11. Never worked and long-term unemployed

سكنا من الامم

Could this be the new face of Trafalgar Square?

Details of a new look are to be unveiled on Monday. Jonathan Glancey is with the RSA in wanting wild modern art

Plans by the Royal Society of Arts to reinvent Trafalgar Square include a changing display of radical sculpture.

Rachel Whiteread, Bill Woodrow and Mark Wallinger — three proven, if controversial talents — have been signed up. Yet, to date, the RSA has been uncharacteristically secretive about its plans, behaving more like the Government than a force for the common good. Why?

Evidently it feared what the press might do: how unsympathetic treatment might have led to its plans being prejudged, tabloid horror stories of money being squandered on useless modern art. The RSA is also aware that the British like to resist change when possible, particularly when this is directed at a place, like Trafalgar Square, that belongs as much to folklore as to reality. This traffic-laden island of tourists, pigeons, fountains and statues of heroes is not only the geographical heart of London, but the emblematic heart of the nation.

A barely beating heart, though. Cut off by central London's streaming road, and damaged by crude by-pass surgery. A famous place Londoners skirt, while tourists (and football crowds on Cup Final days) take their lives into their hands to reach Nelson's Column and Sir Edwin Landseer's lions.

This situation has been recognised in recent months by the RSA, the Arts Council and the Royal Society of Sculptors, and by the World Squares project, led by the architect Sir Norman Foster. After consultation with every group imaginable, Foster has drawn up plans to breathe new life into Trafalgar Square and to join it to the National Gallery by pedestrianising the marling road that currently divides the two.

A new look square complete with sculpture, smart corner cafés



and direct pedestrian access to the monuments that surround it would, Foster and the RSA believe, draw Londoners back to this place.

What does the average Londoner make of the statues of generals and grandees flanking Nelson's Column? Might a sculpture by Rachel Whiteread be more significant to them than honours of generals Gordon and Napier? The reputation of military chaps who were once national heroes has been revised, and statues of generals are much less popular than they were when Trafalgar Square was laid out, to the designs of Sir Charles Barry, between 1829 and 1841. The veterans of Napier's campaign paid for the statue of their general; it is hard to imagine veterans of the Falklands War funding a statue of Baroness Thatcher for the empty plinth in Nelson's shadow.

Plans for this plinth in recent months have included one from the German artist Joachim Gerz,

for the Public Arts Commissions Agency; he wants to place a piece of turf from the Arsenal football ground on top of it, to connect mass culture with art. He argues Trafalgar Square is London's biggest and busiest public space, and football fans like splashing around in the fountains.

"The saddest thing," says Vivien Lovell, director of the PACTA "would be if the RSA project went off half-cock. There are so many successful examples around the world of artists transforming public spaces that we shouldn't worry. Interventions by artists can always be temporary, as they are in Barcelona, where artists like Elsworth Kelly and Richard Serra have been asked to create works with a life of 50 years. They might last a lot longer, but the artists are freed from having to think of the idea of perpetuity."

Where can we look for inspiration? "Times Square and 42nd

Street in New York," says Lovell. "Then there's La Défense in Paris, a bleak urban landscape that has been humanised by contemporary art. Lots of really brilliant initiatives in New York," says Lovell.

How about replacing Nelson on his column temporarily with a homage to Geri Spice?

tives in Barcelona. The new plans by Tess Jarry and Tom Lomax for Jubilee Square in Leeds, Richard Wentworth working around the new Walsall Art Gallery...

Fine. But, can traditional and modern public sculpture sit

together? "Of course they can," says Lovell. "In Pershing Square in Los Angeles, traditional statuary has been cleverly corralled into one area, which actually gives it more impact than it had before the new works were put in place. The important thing is to think there is always room for change."

Central London has been notably free of contemporary public sculpture. With each passing year, a statue — smaller than in days of Empire — emerges of some worthy. But as old soldiers fade away, the demand for old-school sculptures will fade with them. And they are unlikely to be superseded by a gush of fountains in the guise of unicorns (one of these, backed by the Prince of Wales, was a real proposition a few years ago) or bronze statues of today's heroes — business executives, footballers, night club owners and pop stars.

Despite the RSA's reticence, it seems far more likely that the public would be happy, or could be tempted, to welcome contemporary sculpture. This has worked remarkably well in other city centres (notably in Birmingham) and even in London itself. Broadgate, a broad-shouldered hunk of an office development in the City of London raised in the eighties, is set around with contemporary sculpture of the very highest standard.

The Trafalgar Square proposals take this a step further. Not only does the RSA hope to use the square as a kind of celebration of sculpture, its designs will be entirely abstract. They may well have meaning, but these will have to be divined or felt; they will be the antithesis of the statues of Napier or Gordon.

So what might they plump for beyond Whiteread, Woodrow and Wallinger? What about a giant, primary-coloured pigeon sculpted by Claes Oldenburg? Or how about

getting Christo to wrap Nelson's column, plinth and all? Might Damien Hirst be chivvied out of one of his business enterprises to pickle Landseer's lions? And how about offering Nelson, hero of Trafalgar and the Nile, a sabbatical and replacing him, on a rotating basis (and even a rotating base), by a Jake and Dinos Chapman homage to Geri Spice or a melting ice-block by Anya Gallaccio (fun for those football fans below).

Between installations, corporate sponsorship shows (all the rage in London) would beam their messages from Nelson's eyrie — BT, Tesco, British Airways and all the heroes of culturally-aware New Britain. So the square will no longer be square, but hip and hot and happening... No, perhaps not can go too far. A few months of this and we will be raising a public subscription to bring back Lord Nelson, along with those forgotten Generals Napier and Gordon.

Once rare, reaching 90 will soon be commonplace. As the century nears its end, Hunter Davies seeks out the wisdom of people born in 1900

Good life in the nineties

Over the past two years, I have interviewed 25 people born in 1900. It would have been 26 if the Queen Mother, the best known person on the planet born in 1900, had agreed to an interview, but she wouldn't, alas. She hasn't given an interview since 1923, the year she got engaged, and was ticked off sharply by George V.

At one time, reaching your nineties was like reaching a fantasy land. It did happen, but not many made it. In 1900, life expectancy was 45 for a man and 49 for a woman. In 1900, some 60,000 in the UK reached the age of 85, which was pretty good, all things considered. In 2000, the average male will live to the age of 75 while a female should easily manage 80. By that time

there will be 1,158,000 people in the UK over the age of 85. Being old will be commonplace.

Getting into your late nineties, as those 26 oldies have done, will not exactly be common but it won't be unusual. Most of us already know at least one person who has reached 90.

Will there be any rules for getting there, any code of conduct, any special diets? That was one of the things I wanted to find out from my 26. (I'm including the Queen Mum, even though she wouldn't talk to me, as so much has been written about her.)

One remarkable fact about all my 26 is that they came from large families, yet went on to have small families. The QM is a good example. She was the ninth of 10 children, but only had two herself. Among my other 25, there were two who came from

families of 10, one from nine, three from eight. The average family numbered five. When it came to spawning, they managed only 1.6.

When I started looking for people born in 1900, I thought I would be lucky to find more than half a dozen people born in 1900 who were also able physically and mentally to put up with a two-hour interview. The idea had been sparked off by my father-in-law, Arthur Forster. He had been born in 1900, never moved or lived more than two miles from his birthplace in Cardiff, and on the face of it had lived a fairly humdrum, ordinary life. But of course no one has, especially not someone who has lived so long, observed so much.

I wrote to provincial newspapers, asking to make contact with people born in 1900. I spoke to friends of friends. I rang agencies for the elderly. They came in slowly at first, but in the end I had more than 50 to choose from. I wanted a regional spread, a class spread and an equal number of women and men. In real life, there are twice as many females as males in this age group, but I wanted the sexes balanced.

My 25 included two former doctors, a lawyer, a miner, a printer, a waitress, a regular Army officer, three female factory workers, a policeman, a builder, a textile worker, a captain of an ocean liner, a motorcycle maker. Only two were what might be called "famous", both of them women. Dame Elizabeth Hill, one of Cambridge's most eminent professors, and Mary Ellis, a star of the West End and Hollywood. Almost all, when I saw them, were still living inde-

pendent lives. Two were still driving at 96; one, Len Vale-Oslof of Birmingham, was still riding his motorbike. Two were in nursing homes, one in sheltered housing. Mostly they were living in their own homes, or the home of a daughter or son.

Memories of their early years were incredibly clear. They could remember the names of class mates from 1910; where they were on August 4, 1914, when war broke, and what they thought. To a man, and a woman, they remembered the scenes of euphoria.

Only three of my 25 experienced a divorce in their own family. The QM's, by comparison, the matriarch of one of the most dysfunctional families in

the kingdom. The Queen has got six grandchildren, all from broken homes.

The single most common factor in getting into your nineties is to have at least one parent who lived to a decent age. The Queen Mother's father got to 89 and her mother 76. Two-thirds of my 25 had at least one parent who got to around 80. Genes matter. It also helped not to get killed in battle. The men in my sample included three who served in both world wars. They were incredibly lucky.

Genes and wars are a matter of luck. What about the things you can alter? Diet would appear to be of minor importance. Arthur, my father-in-law, had a fry-up breakfast every day of his life. And even at 90 he could drink more beer than I could.

Most of them were still taking a drink or two. When I went to see Daisy Briscoe, a retired Suffolk GP, he took me out to the pub for lunch where we went through the menu and drank wine. Florence Parsons from London thought one of the explanations for her long life was eating suet puddings. Emma Logan in Manchester was still having a Guinness a day. The Queen Mum, so we are led to believe, is still fond of a tippie.

You can take it to excess and still survive. Leonard Cooper, ex-Radley and Oxford, father of Leo Cooper the publisher (and father-in-law of Jilly), did take drink to excess in his thirties and forties, but when I saw him at his daughter's home in Norfolk he was sparkling. Not having had a drink for 39 years had obviously given him a chance to recover.

Having a routine and living an ordered life would seem to be valuable. All of them, even those in the humblest of occupations, had always been organised. During the long years of retirement, they had created frameworks and rituals.

But the thing that struck me most about them all was their outgoingness. Even at the age of 97 and 98, and not necessarily in the best of health, they were not self-obsessed. They were interested in other people, and always had been, according to their children. They were still curious. If you want to live to a ripe old age, acquire the art of looking out at the world, not in at yourself.

Hunter Davies's Born 1900 is published this week by Little, Brown (£16.95)

books

Enoch Powell was a clever little boy — right to the end of his life. **Jad Adams** on the price of staying aloof from the world

Scowelly Powellly

Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell
by Simon Heffer
1024pp, Weidenfeld, £25

Enoch Powell was at 25 the youngest university professor in the British Empire; he was one of only two men to be promoted from private soldier through to brigadier in the second world war; he was by common consent the most brilliant mind on the Tory benches in the half-century when they dominated parliament. So why was his life such a failure? Why did he end up not consorting with the great movers and shakers of the world, but became the darling of the small-minded, the mean-spirited for whom "Enoch was right" expressed a world of racial prejudice?

This book should be able to tell us. It was written by a friend of Powell's with full access to the subject's public and private papers, which gives the author an advantage over Robert Shepherd's excellent 1996 biography.

Heffer takes us on a trot — not a gallop or even a canter — through all the events of Powell's life. No speech or publication seems to be omitted, even when they have little or nothing to do with the trajectory of Powell's career. Consequently the book cries out for the services of a good editor to concentrate its bulk.

The comprehensive approach does, however, pay off over details of Powell's early life. He was an only child with the qualities common in only children: an inability to get on with other children (who called him Scowelly Powell); a conviction of his central position in the world which made him burt and bitter when he did not enjoy from others the unconditional love he had received from his parents; a precocious appetite for learning and for demonstrating his knowledge in public displays.

As an adult poet Powell was perceptive about his desperate desire for a return to security:

*Mother, with longing ever new
And joy too great for telling
I turn again to rest in you
My earliest dwelling.*

Not surprisingly, Powell had difficulty with the opposite sex who were just "part of the vocabulary of poetry" for him, not living creatures. His homoerotic impulses

towards the few men who became close to him Heffer discounts as "schoolboy crushes" which he had "late in life" because he had devoted the time on his studies which most spend on juvenile sex. All this tells us is that Heffer thinks sexual orientation is immutable, but he does realise that Pamela Powell (to whom this book is dedicated) "took over the mantle of his mother" when Powell finally married his former secretary at the start of his parliamentary career.

He had joined the Conservative Party in 1946, partly "to ensure the continuance of British rule in India" and thus started as he went on, backing hopeless causes but achieving a certain notoriety for it.

"Stop being 12 years old," Iain Macleod wrote to him when the fledgling MP Powell was miffed because Macleod got a promotion and he did not. The Tory grandees were wise in not over-promoting Powell. He never seemed to be able to seize or to hang on to office. He turned down two offers of a government job in his career; resigned office twice; and was sacked from the shadow cabinet before eventually resigning from the Conservative Party.

His resignation in 1958 was at least part of a team effort: he and the other Treasury minister Nigel Birch resigned with Chancellor Peter Thorneycroft over spending cuts. Heffer agrees with Powell's proto-maoistism which gave government spending a central role in the cause of inflation, so he subjects it to oo scrutiny, preferring to lambast Macmillan for his "cowardly attitude" in not talking the Powell line, for his "principle-free conduct of politics".

Macmillan generously offered Powell another job but he refused it on the grounds that Peter Thorneycroft was not invited back into the government. It was a peculiar kind of political loyalty which put respect for a former colleague in front of support for his party and government.

In 1959 he accepted the Ministry of Health where he set aside all the obsessions with unworkable principles and was a diligent and effective minister: presiding over increased spending in his already high-spending ministry; managing hospitals "on the basis of a great deal of foreign labour" as Gaitskill charged him; supporting Britain's application to join the Common Market.

Making the best of what was available did not appeal, however,

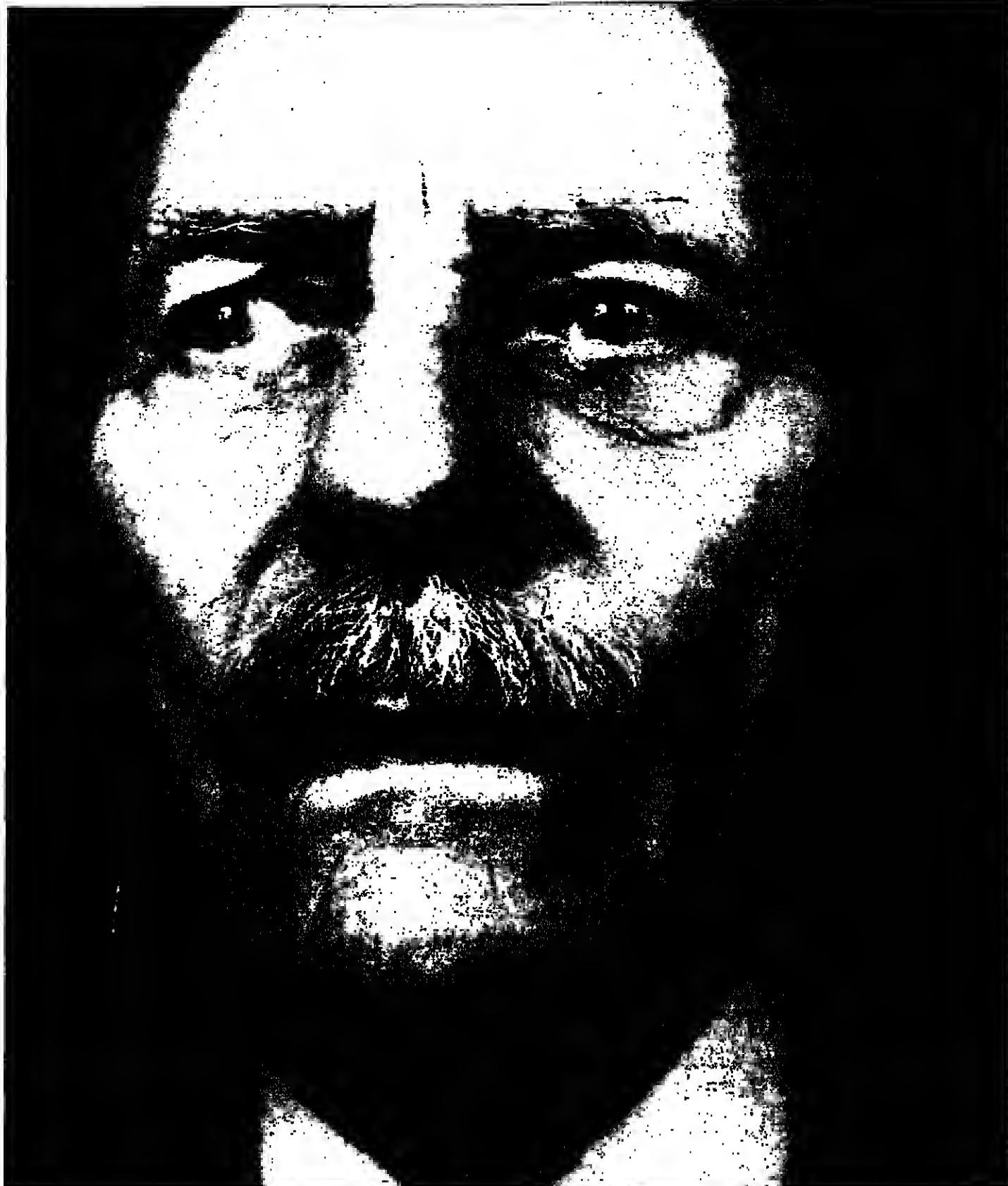
Like the petulant little boy he always was, he would rather be trouble than be useful because it confirmed his sense of uniqueness. It was time to resign again, this time over the appointment of Lord Home as Prime Minister after Macmillan's departure due to illness. It was never clear why he did this. Heffer comments, "Powell kept his reasons to himself, regarding them as so self-evident as to require no explanation, and knowing that his own explanation was secure in his archive and would oo day be known."

Well, Simon Heffer has had access to that archive and the reasons are still unclear. Because Powell said he would not serve unless Macleod did and Macleod did not? Because he supported Home's rival, Butler (who himself was prepared to serve, as Foreign Secretary)? Maybe he was just a great resigner, finding this the only way in which he could grab himself some of the attention in a drama where he had only a walk-on role.

He was, anyway, back under Home as soon as the 1964 election was over, as a front bench opposition spokesman. The pitiless logic of his return was that he had refused to serve under Home as Prime Minister, now Home oo longer held that post Powell's refusal was nullified. Is it any wonder he exasperated his colleagues?

One of these, Robert Carr, noted to Heffer how Powell at this time had "ceased to have [the] ability to laugh with you, let alone laugh at himself... There was no give and take. It was all or nothing." This is middle-aged desperation, the feeling that seizes the ambitious in their fifties: that if they don't make a decisive mark oo, the time is lost.

Powell began a series of speeches on immigration or "coloured immigration" as he put it, as if there were oo distinction between oo-white immigrants, part of the vocabulary of menace he began to spin oo the public platform where his weak premises were not open to direct challenge. Lord Hailsham always held against Powell his silence on immigration when the shadow cabinet had discussed it on April 10, 1968, agreeing a policy of a limitation on immigration into Britain but equal treatment for everyone in the country when immigrants were here. Ten days later Powell made his "rivers of blood" speech, distributing it to the media via means which would avoid subject-



Enoch Powell... a life spent waiting for the call of destiny. It never came

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE PYLE

ing it to his colleagues' scrutiny. Thus he told his Birmingham audience of a letter from a woman in Northumberland about a woman in Wolverhampton living in a street where a house had been sold to a black man eight years earlier. Now she was the only white person in the street. She was menaced by black men, had windows broken, excreta pushed through the letter box, was followed by children who could speak oo English except the taunt "racist".

This is the pathetically sad pass to which the professor of Greek, the pre-eminent textual scholar had come. As much oo as when it was first delivered, one year to force Powell simply to look at the words. What does a woman in Northumberland (name withheld) actually know about conditions in Wolverhampton? If the alleged constituent had problems, why did she not write herself? Why did not Powell make a pastoral visit to her to ascertain the facts? Was it likely that every house in a road was inhabited by New Commonwealth immigrants? That children might learn as their first English word a four syllable abstract term? What

kind of "black" people were these, anyway? Caribbeans spoke English as a first language; Asians were not claimed to be aggressive, even by their severest detractors.

Powell had utterly failed to subject the document to the slightest analysis. Nor has Heffer, despite his unrivalled access to Powell's papers, retrieved this document and given it the examination it oeds, nor contacted the writer to see if she or her descendants have any further light to throw on the matter.

I have always thought Powell's use of this despicable document was born of his ignorance of the world due to his sheltered upbringing, his sequestered academic life, his generally aloof personality. I thought he genuinely did not understand that people uttered vile fabrications in order to influence the world.

Thanks to this book, despite Heffer's attempts to portray Powell as a model of integrity and presence, it looks like Powell's use of an obvious fake was wilful: he did know it was false and

could reasonably have predicted it would legitimise every similar racist diatribe for decades. But it served his purpose of promoting him as a national saviour, a voice in the wilderness, a politician who spoke the truth when oo other did.

That a senior politician should wish to see himself as the fiery prophet of the white English gave succour to a generation of oo-Nazis. Heffer notes that Powell's opponents "claimed that immigrant communities were pitched into terror by Powell's speech, as he seemed to be legitimising racial attacks oo them" but he gives no detail. Had Powell repudiated organised racism oo or in the future it would have counted in his favour, but oo-Nazi groups always claimed they had this tacit support.

Now was the time for at least three of Powell's shadow cabinet colleagues to enunciate a matter of principle and threaten to resign unless he were sacked, and Powell was out.

Half of this book takes us up to the 1968 speech and events surrounding it; the other half is

largely bathetic: Powell's lessening influence, despite his continued popularity among the old grunners of the Conservative associations. He appealed even then by supporting Labour in the two 1974 elections, but his capacity for outrage was dwindling. He was invited to stand as a Unionist MP in Northern Ireland, that graveyard of causes. He was a man never to see office again, the vainglorious orator of Howard Barker's play based on him, *The Loud Boy's Life* (with which Heffer shows no familiarity), who spends most of the action waiting for the call of destiny to lead the nation. It never comes.

Heffer says his subject never wrote a diary or memoirs because, in Powell's oft-repeated phrase, it would be like "returning to his own vomit". Powell's feelings that he had failed himself and others shows through occasionally in these pages. Powell could not write his own story for it would have demonstrated too sharply for him how well-deserved was his self-disgust over what he could have been, and what he had become.

Michael Bracewell salutes David Shrigley

Renaissance man

Why We Got the Sack from the Museum
by David Shrigley
Redstone Press, £9.95

As an artist whose chosen medium is crudely drawn cartoons with accompanying texts and slogans which make hilarious short stories of each completed illustration, David Shrigley articulates the daily experience of fear, anxiety, boredom or rage in a visual language that is at ooce poetic and absurd.

The breadth of his vision, arguably, is Renaissance in its ambition, seeking to accomplish nothing less than a depiction of the whole of human hope and suffering beneath the eyes of a jealous and wrathful God.

And, as if to announce the moral climate of the perilous and lonely world which his drawings describe, Shrigley commences this

latest collection of his work with a badly drawn picture of three allegorical creatures depicting "Good", "Evil" and "Don't Know" beneath the words "Time To Choose". A hairy-armed, goat-horned thug in a dress, "Evil" is the tallest and most dominating of these moral cyphers.

Stylistically, Shrigley draws as though he was Aubrey Beardsley's belligerent brother, illustrating a monologue by Eddie Izzard whilst fearing for the safety of his soul. In this present collection, the blunt punk humour of Shrigley's work depicts a view of the human condition in which rage, nihilism and self-pity are the response to a largely frustrating and shabby world.

There is a sense in which Shrigley is drawing from the point of view of a person who has had to walk home from the bus stop in the rain just ooce too often, assailed by petty irritations which become a measure of purgatory on

earth. A definition of Shrigley's aesthetic and world view could be found in a sculpture which he made in 1991, and which consisted of an old cardboard box placed on a piece of wasteland, with a little door cut out of it and the words "Leisure Centre" written in uneven capital letters across its front.

Similarly, in *Why We Got the Sack from the Museum* there is a drawing entitled "I'm Sorry..." which is comprised of a succession of small panels, each one of which contains a statement of the artist's crimes. Beginning with "I'm sorry I pissed down the chimney of the doll's house", and concluding with a general apology for "my cowardly persecution of the weak and defenceless", Shrigley is offering a self-portrait in which the comedy is balanced oo a sense of self-coocept in which the artist is both the villain and the victim.

Will Self, in his introduction to this collection of Shrigley's drawings, suggests that, "Despite the

TIME TO CHOOSE



apparent objectifications they deal with, these are not, in fact, drawings of things at all; rather, they are drawings of the shapes that things, people, ideas and emotions make in our lives."

The accuracy of this analysis can be seen in the manner through which, time and time again, Shrigley elevates what are seemingly ooerotic or violent doodles into maps or depictions of states of mind. And, more often than not, the sequences of the drawings are punctuated by a direct address to the readers, as in: "Why do you find my drawings so annoying? Are you some kind of moron with freakish tastes? Everyone else likes them so why don't you? Just trying to be different, eh? I always knew you were a twat", written above what looks like the outline of the coffee cup with the word "The" and something crossed out in the middle of it.

This notion that drawings can be doodles which articulate the mental "doodling" of hidden or unexpressed opinions could be found in oo of Shrigley's earlier collections, published as an artists' book by The Artpit Press, entitled *Drawings Done Whilst On Phone To Idiot*.

As a primer for this new collection, these earlier drawings established Shrigley's artistic identity as a supposedly untrained "outsider"

— or social outcast — whose determination to get into conflict with an invisible moral legislation lends a kind of semi-formed authority to his crazy pronouncements.

Like a person who sends off-cious or incomprehensible letters to the editor of a local newspaper, expecting engagement or dialogue on their own terms, Shrigley's drawings exist in the singular world of their own sealed vision. They revel in a brilliant exploitation of the idea of painful anaesthetism, describing both the pointlessness of moralising in situations which make no moral sense, and the constant possibility of eternal judgement on our most trivial and absurd of acts.

But the sheer comic brilliance of Shrigley's drawings is what might turn him into Britain's answer to Matt Groening. So far, his reputation has been made within the world of contemporary art, and in many ways his drawing "Why We Got the Sack from the Museum" — which depicts a group of poorly drawn stick men taking the paintings off the walls and standing on them — explains why.

Shrigley's art, like a psychotic version of Matt Groening's "Life In Hell" cartoons, gives a voice to those aspects of ourselves that we most fear and try to keep hidden, but have always longed to express.

The Guardian fiction prize

This year's winner, Jackie Kay, talks to **Maya Jaggi** about the trumpet player who dared to play out her life as a man

Race and all that jazz

The germ of Jackie Kay's first novel *Trumpet*, winner of this year's Guardian Fiction Award, was in four lines in a newspaper about the death of the 30-year-old jazz pianist Billy Tipton. His biological womanhood became public only when he died in 1989, aged 75.

"I've always been interested in people creating an identity, the fluidity of inventing themselves," says Kay. "Women who dressed up as men captured my imagination, that visual self-creation — Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Josephine Baker — I thought they were sexy. But Billy Tipton was about living your life like that: he was a self-made man. It intrigued me that his son was quoted as saying, 'He'll always be Daddy to me'."

The central figure of *Trumpet* is a Scottish jazz trumpeter, Joss Moody, revealed on his deathbed, as the bandages swathing his chest are unwound, to have been a woman. It is told mainly through the eyes of his grieving widow Millie, the sole party to his "secret", and his adopted son Colman, bitter at his exclusion from it. Walker on characters here is a gift from the doctor and undertaker to a tabloid-bound, Sophie Stanes, who plans to ghost-write a book on Joss fuelled by Colman's anger, and the drummer Big Red McCall ("It's the fucking music that matters").

The novel was published to enthusiasm for its range of voices, Kay's ear for the cadences of colloquial speech and reminiscence, and for its open-ended refusal to offer pat answers as it questions the rigid line we draw between "reality" and performance or masquerade.

Set in the present day, *Trumpet*

looks back to Joss's heyday in fifties Glasgow — the city where Kay grew up — and London. "I made the character Scottish because I am," she says in a dimly lit bar in the stylish new Malmaison hotel in Manchester, where she now lives with her nine-year-old son Matthew.

At 37, Kay has built a glowing reputation as a poet and dramatist (her fourth poetry collection, *Off Colour*, was published by Bloodaxe last month). Born in Edinburgh of a white Scottish mother and Nigerian father, she was adopted by a white Glaswegian couple who were communists — the theme of her first poetry book *The Adoption Papers* (1991). Winner of the Saltire and Forward prizes, and dramatised on radio, it is a fresh, funny, sometimes anguished tale of adoption told through the voices of the birth mother, adoptive mother and daughter. For Kay, "it's a pain in the neck that people assume it's my story". She has in reality never met her birth mother.

Being adopted, she believes, "is just like saying 'I was born'; it gives you so many possibilities to play with." While she does not question her own transracial adoption, "because I would never choose not to have had the parents I had," she says, "in general it's probably not a good thing. It can be very confusing to a child".

Growing up, she had "fantasy relationships with black people around the world — Angela Davis, Louis Armstrong, Nelson Mandela, Ella Fitzgerald". But she was most drawn to the blues singer whose biography she has written, Bessie Smith (Absolute Press, 1997), also the subject of her play *Every Day Of It*. "Bessie was bisexual, and had lots of relation-



Jackie Kay... 'we all have secret lives'

PHOTOGRAPH: HOWARD BARLOW

ships with men and women. She was one of the most important voices of the 20th century. I grew up in Scotland without many black people around — except my brother — and Bessie became part of my family. I looked at her and saw some reflection of myself."

Music became a passion: "Blues aren't afraid of sexuality, of sadomasochism, death, grief, drugs. There's no story too shocking to find its way into blues narratives. I love that level of raunchiness — 'His jolly roll is nice and sweet' — even though I didn't quite understand it when I was young," she laughs.

Trumpet's form echoes jazz. "There's a solo, with improvisations by people affected by this secret; one refrain made to play different ways. Jazz is fascinating, because it's always fluid, it has the past in it — work songs, slave songs, blues. Jazz is a process of reinventing itself. And race, too, is less fixed, more fluid, in jazz. There's a sense of jazz being a family."

Trumpet's questioning of

boundaries extends to racial identity. Both Joss and his adopted son are of mixed race, while Millie is white. Joss "passes" as a man rather than as some light-skinned black American historically "passed for white". But of the "tragic mulatto" in African-American literature, Kay says: "There is something tragic in pretending to be white, whereas sexually cross-dressing and crossing gender barriers are more liberating."

She has little interest in seeing Joss's disguise as the price of the ticket into the macho jazz world. "There's a pleasure for Joss in appearing as a man and not being one," she insists. "I like the disruptiveness of the transvestite, challenging our notions of gender and how fixed we're into making them. People get frightened by sexual explorations into the unknown. They say, 'I'm 100 per cent heterosexual'. Why do people need to say that? I think it's because we're all quite complex; we all have sexual attractions that unsettle us."

She adds: "I do think we all have

secret lives. Even if you're openly gay, as I am, there's still a lot of things people don't say about their sexuality." While "the hutch-femme relationship is nothing new, where one woman can take on a male role, Millie is not portrayed as a 'woman who loves women' but as a woman in love with someone she regards as a man — her husband."

Kay finds many of the ways in which people's identity is fixed "horribly out-dated". "When you read that 'woman who loves women' but as a woman in love with someone she regards as a man — her husband."

Trumpet reveals with tenderness and delicacy just how mundane are Joss's family life and Millie's bereavement. "Once you

categorise people you stop them from having the same experience as 'ordinary' people. Everything about them must be different, because you make people into freaks, who don't have feelings or illnesses or grief or spots; freaks are just freaks. But people aren't freaks to me."

Kay's second poetry collection, *Other Lovers* (1993), which won a Somerset Maugham award, included verse from *Trumpet*. *Through The Heart*, a BBC 2 poetry documentary that became an English National Opera song cycle. It was inspired by Amelia Rossini, a woman jailed for murdering her husband and freed on appeal. Kay says: "I was interested in women who kill who've been abused and battered for years: the day you suddenly snap, and how your life changes; you become a 'murderer', and how unreal that is."

Trumpet lays bare this gap between life as lived and as reported, the encroachment of the public gaze into private lives.

The shortlist

The other books shortlisted were: Derek Beaven's *Acts of Mistrust* (Fourth Estate, £14.99); William Boyd's *Armadillo* (Hamish Hamilton, £18.99); Alan Hollinghurst's *The Spell* (Corgi, £16.99); Liz Jensen's *Art Baby* (Bloomsbury, £5.99pbk, £8.99pbk); and Edward St Aubyn's *On the Edge* (Corgi, £10.99).

The judges

The judges were: Lindsay Duguid, Maya Jaggi, Alex Clark, Anthony Julius, Tibor Fleischer and Mark Lawson. The panel was chaired by Stephen Moss.

"Secrecy and sleaze go hand in glove," says Kay. "We no longer have fables and fairy tales, but instant lies and tell — hunting stories down like an animal and dismembering them, then going on to the next chase."

"There's something terribly prurient and salacious about our society. It's perhaps that society is more repressed than we think it is. We love this humiliation of someone caught in the act, especially if they claimed to be something different. It's dreadful that people who change their identity have to get rid of their past and live in fear of discovery, just to be who they are." Yet she sees progress. "People are coming out in droves. It's incredible you can be openly gay in government now. And while there's still a revulsion and hatred towards people who change sex, we have a Labour councillor who's done that."

Whether Joss's secret was really a lie — and whether a greater one than his tabloid spin — is left to the reader. But part of *Trumpet's* power lies in its gradual subverting of prurient curiosity. Though Colman has been kept in the dark, he senses that "all children of lovers are orphans" — excluded from their parents' intimacies. "There is a triumphant sense of love leaping social barriers, and of its irreducible mystery."

"Love is just the most important thing; it changes you," says Kay. "We live in a cynical time, but in the book I'm trying to rediscover love in a pure way, in an old-fashioned sense."

Trumpet is published by Picador at £12.99. If you would like to order a copy at the special price of £9.99 (plus 59p p&h), ring the Guardian CultureShop on 0500 600 102.

A S Byatt has long been fascinated by Nordic myths and legends. Here she writes about the lessons of those narratives and, right, Alex Clark reviews Byatt's new short stories of fire and ice

A hunger for the marvellous

In the summers, I sit in the hot sun in a southern French village, and write. I think of myself as one of those North Europeans who are shocked into a different rhythm, a new energy, by light. I write about those, who wrote Peer Gynt in a heat wave in Ischia, or Van Gogh painting the heat snaking round olive trees. Perhaps for this reason, I write increasingly about coldness, ice, snow, Norwegian folk tales, the Northern Lights.

When I first met Anthony Burgess, I assumed we were the same sort of intellectual from modest families from northern industrial cities, Manchester and Sheffield. But, apart from smog, our memories were quite different. I saw that west of the Pennines is Celtic and Catholic, whilst the country I grew up in was settled by Danes and Norsemen. And all this added to a kind of romance of my origins which began with the book I most loved, most frequently re-read as a child, *Asgard and the Gods*, by Doctor W Wagner. It was not a children's book — it was first published in 1890, and my mother had bought it as a crib for her Ancient Norse and Icelandic examinations at Cambridge in the late twenties. It was full of wonderful engravings of the Wild Hunt, the Fenris Wolf, the Valkyrie and the white elves and black dwarves. It fed my hunger for the marvellous as nothing else did — not the Bible, not the Greek gods, not Hans Andersen. The book that came nearest was *Peter's Progress*, with its fiends and giants, but that comparatively could be seen to have (moral) designs on me. Whereas something in me responded to the Norse tales as an image of real truths.

This is surprising, since they are the gods of battles, blood lust and berserkers. Perhaps I recognised them because I was a wartime child, in an endangered world, where the righteous might not pre-

vail. The Greek gods behaved like naughty children, at least in the books I had and treated humans like naughty children. Their natural mode of communication with human beings was either rape or favouritism, and their mode of communication with each other was a kind of glorified sibling rivalry. They were capricious and continuously smiling, since they were the Immortals. These northern gods were not human beings — they were much more natural forces, parts of the earth that had taken on personalities. They could be saddened and diminished by their own treachery, or that of others. They could be defeated. That was how I knew the world was in truth.

The stories were complex and stirring. Loki was probably the first charming, destructive trickster to baffle me with my own responses. Odin was a god but his search for wisdom diminished him — he gave an eye to Mimir, the giant, for the right to drink out of the fountain of wisdom; he bung between fires, and sang of Valhalla and the World-Tree, he invented runes and led the Wild Hunt across the stormy sky. He knew that he and his fellow gods, the Aesir, would be vanquished at the end of things. The fact that *Asgard and the Gods* was a mythological compendium, not a story-book, added to its mystery — I read about the exploits of Wotan, Wodan, Wode, Godan, and felt that this shape-shifting represented a universal force, which occasionally burst into narrative, I liked the rather grim sense of fate in the story of Balder and Hodur, the fact that Loki was able to give the blind brother a lance made of the only plant which could harm the bright boy, who went to Hel and did not rise again.

I was excited by the Norse Creation myth, partly because of the sonorous words: Ginnungagap, the primal gulf, Muspelheim,



A S Byatt... lured by a world where the Gods and the heroes are defeated

Nifelheim, Midgard, or Middle Earth, circled by the snake, and Yggdrasil, the World-Ash, with its roots perpetually gnawed by the black Nidhogg.

Most of all, in the end, I liked the idea of Ragnarök, the Last Battle, always foreseen, in which the old order fought both the evil that had been created — Loki's monstrous children, the wolf and the monstrous snake and the natural forces of destruction — Surtur and the sons of fire, issuing out of Muspelheim. There were wonderful touches: Nagelfar, the ship of death, constructed out of the nails of the dead, uncut by humans since love and pity had vanished in the fratricidal wars that preceded the Last Battle. I still use the image of the emptiness after Ragnarök to comfort myself in

gloomier moments when I think we are destroying biodiversity and the earth we inhabit, temporarily. "When the fire went out," wrote Doctor Wagner, "the quietest sea overflowed the scene of desolation. No creature, no life, moved in its depths; no mermaid floated on the dark waves; no star was reflected on its surface."

Years passed, perhaps centuries — there was none to count them — and again the morning star bathed its head in the calm waters. A new sun arose, the glowing child of the old. At length a new earth appeared above the waters. At first it was bare and desolate, but the rays of the sun touched it, and soon it was covered with grass and herbs and the well-flavoured loek. *Asgard and the Gods* gives a writer a perfect paradigm of all

sorts of narrative — the linear, ending in defeat, the cyclical, ending in rebirth, the riddling, box-in-box full of alternative versions, characters who may be the same, or different, or who change their names and natures. It takes the world with a northern sadness and seriousness; it is intricate and singing. I recognised it, of course, when I first met Wagner's Ring. I saw, with a rueful irony, that I had grown up on what Doctor Wagner called the myths and folklore of the "old Germanic world" — the myths that appealed to Hitler and his men, with their Aryan nonsense. There is a further irony, of course, which is that what appealed to both Wagner and the little girl I was in a world at war, was the fact that in these stories the gods and the heroes are alike defeated.

Elementals: Stories of Fire and Ice by A S Byatt 230pp, Chatto & Windus, £12 Alex Clark

Following in the footsteps of *The Matisse Stories* and *The Dinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, *Elementals* allows A S Byatt, through the medium of the short story, to examine the ideas and images prompted by a chosen theme at her leisure — enjoying a paradoxical freedom that comes from the rigour and economy demanded by the short form rather than the sprawling profusion of her full-length novels. In her novel series particularly, that plenitude has sometimes palled and here, the simplicity of plot and characterisation is a relief. But viewed in a different way, this type of short story, fabular, schematic, concerned with the precise enactment of content through language and symbolism, also gives Byatt the chance to behave in a way her eloquence and intellect occasionally curb. She is allowed to be naughty.

Her mischievousness is largely given over to confusing our trust in our senses, urging us to examine the jumble of impressions caused by heat, light and colour, in a kind of literary synaesthesia. In the first story in the collection, "Crocodile Tears", our faith in her narrative wisdom is tested more than once. Patricia Nimm and her husband Tony, well-off and cultured Wimbledon folk, are visiting a quiet Bloomsbury art gallery on a Sunday afternoon. They quarrel over a picture-cum-collage of an English seaside, which Tony likes and Patricia irrationally dismisses as banal. Tony walks away, and dies suddenly. Guided by an unexpected and irresistible impulse Patricia flees the scene, and by a succession of trains reaches Nimes, where she reads Proust in the original and is assailed by the heat and the light and the endless pageant of Mediterranean colours.

Much of the story is taken up with Patricia's reluctant association with a Norwegian ethnologist who appears with ghostly presence exactly when Patricia appears most likely to jump

under a speeding car or off a parapet. Yet Byatt's manipulation of these two characters, the self-possessed and stoical Patricia, the disturbed and disturbing Nils, takes place against a symbolic background designed to overwhelm and confuse. The couple drink *am-de-ice* as they discuss death, visit the burial sites of gladiators while tormented by their own mutual hostility, observe the bloodthirsty bull-fights of the local fiesta while in the grip of a curious passionlessness. The resolution at the end of the story, although logical and satisfactory, seeming to advocate life and the mind over death and inanity, is also ironic and wry.

"Cold" is the most obvious fairy-tale of the collection, the story of a princess willed by heat and restored only by the austerity and clearness of ice. Yet Fiammarosa, descendant of an ice-woman, is beguiled by the glass sculptures and burning touches of a desert prince, so much so that she exchanges her frosty home for the oppressively hot climate of another kingdom. Here, heat is not passionate, it is oppressive, the cold a corrective atmosphere in which wits are sharpened and lithe limbs exercised. An alliance of sorts is forged at the story's close, however much the reader might sorrow over the ice-woman's exile in a warm country.

The six stories that feature here are clearly not Byatt's most ambitious or considered work, and at times they fall short. The first three, discussed here, are by and large more interesting and more successfully realised than the second three, although "Jael" is a fine exploration of the arbitrariness of memory. Elsewhere, though, the delicacy of Byatt's writing often relies on a connoisseurship which, in its turn, seems to speak of a party to which we are not all invited. That isn't to criticise Byatt's erudition, her dedication to intellectual precision, or even her concern with the most subtle of debates about art and its relation to life. It's simply that these stories are at their best, both most instructive and most entertaining, when Byatt gives her humour and her passion free rein, and indulges most freely in that propensity for naughtiness.

arts

The lost boy

Lee Mavericks of the La's was a star in the early nineties and idolised by Oasis. Then he fell foul of drugs and disappeared. Amid rumours of a comeback, **Dave Simpson** follows the trail of pop's mystery man



The word genius is often abused but it definitely applies to Lee Mavericks. You've probably heard of his Liverpool band, the La's; possibly their classic 1990 eponymous album, and almost certainly their seminal pop song, *There She Goes*. This magical, melodic single has been a hit three times, and has achieved near mythical status, featuring in everything from a car advert to the film, *Fever Pitch*. Noel Gallagher once described Oasis's primary motivation as being "to finish what the La's started", and a powerful chunk of the legend also revolves around the unexplained fate of their gifted creator.

Lee Mavericks has been a virtual reclusive for years. After his eccentric behaviour split the band in 1992, bassist John Power rose to new success with Cast, but Mavericks has followed a lonely path into public invisibility. Rumours of

heroin addiction and alcoholism are countered by suggestions that he's recorded more than 40 songs for what will eventually be the album of the decade. Talk to most people in Liverpool about Mavericks and they'll mutter a few words and then scurry away, as if you were asking about a vampire in the local castle. Most people close to him say, "I'd love to talk, but really can't".

But any of the stories could be true. When Mavericks appeared onstage in 1993, he was an incoherent shadow of his former self. It's now eight years since he announced he would be spending the next eight years producing the perfect (second) album. He's now 36 and so album is in sight, so what has happened to the dark horse of modern pop?

The story of the La's begins in 1983, but Mavericks — a former punk into shits music — hit the scene three years later when he ousted singer/songwriter Mike Badger

from the group. Although Badger had coined the name the La's (a Liverpoolian abbreviation of "lad", with obvious musical overtones), the effect of Mavericks' leadership was immediate. As the eighties floundered in a sea of synthetic, over-produced pop, Lee updated the classic lineage of the Beatles, Kinks, Beethoven and the Who squarely in the heroin and unemployment-racked ruins of Liverpool. It was a masterpiece. His songs had a surreal rock 'n' roll feel but his subject matter was starkly postmodern. "Don't go down to Doledrum," he urged. More eerily, *Son Of A Gun* spoke of a "boy of life, who lived up to a knife. He was burned by the twentieth century, now he's doing time in the back of his mind".

Within months of signing to Go! Discs, the La's' exuberant *Way Out* single troubled the charts as the determined, obsessive, vaguely druggy Mavericks expounded his philosophy to a delighted music press. "It's not about being a musician,"

he insisted. "It's not about being a 'face'. It's just passing on a feeling." He talked excitedly about the band's forthcoming album. "These songs are gonna go to the people and the people are gonna go 'Wow!'"

But even then there were signs that all was not well with Mavericks. His first problem was capturing the sounds in his head. After years on the dole and recording quickly in council-funded studios, he was obsessed with retaining the "purity" of his music. Desperate to capture the "vibe" of their own rehearsal rooms, the La's tried eight-track studios, primitive four-track studios of the kind used by the Beatles 25 years before, and, at one point, a Walkman. Mavericks was so a bizarre creative roll. He smoked "wacky baccy" continually and was increasingly alienated from the music business.

"The La's had an unquantifiable magic about them," says Hull Adelphi's Paul Jackson, who booked them throughout this period. "But I think Lee found all the attention difficult."

Sent to Liverpool to coax out a rare interview, one journalist was instead treated to a private, 20-minute unravelling of the heart-breaking *Looking Glass*. When Mavericks talked seriously of finding a mixing desk with "original sixties dust", people were convinced he was going mad.

Four years, seven studios, two producers and several abandoned sessions later, an exasperated Go! Discs employed Steve Lillywhite to piece together an album from hordes of scrapped recordings. When *The La's* was finally released in November 1990 the reviews were among the most ecstatic received by a debut album, but it was clear the prolonged creative process and acute sense of betrayal had sucked something out of Mavericks. He professed to hate the finished record. Within two years, following a run of

hit singles, two blistering tours and with the La's star at its brightest, he simply disappeared.

Maybe the trigger was the departure of cornerstone bassist John Power, who had become frustrated at the inactivity that now surrounded the band's career. Or maybe it was linked to hard drugs.

In 1995 I asked Power whether even the tantalising lyrics of *There She Goes* were a secret paeon to heroin. "I don't know. Truth is, I don't wanna know. Drugs and



'Mavers has got this song called *The Human Race*, and it's the best thing he's ever written. Better than *There She Goes*'

madness go hand in hand. People who you've known all your life... they're steady, then they're not. But you can't ponder, cos it kills you, la."

Soon after Cast released the biggest selling debut album in Polydor's history, *All Change*, Mavericks appeared with a fine-up of the La's at Hull's Adelphi. It wasn't a pretty sight. "I love Lee but he

had loads of problems," says the Adelphi's Paul Jackson. "He wasn't used to playing live. He was very pissed if he wasn't on the snack. It was a bit sad. I think he played *There She Goes* three times without realising he'd done it."

Watching in Hull were the promoters of Oasis, who were planning a La's comeback. Underwhelmed, they allowed Mavericks one gig with Oasis in Brighton. Mavericks went away, but his songs didn't. Oasis took the stage for last year's triumphant *Earls Court* appearances to the strains of *There She Goes*. In the audience was former La's manager Rob Swire. "I just felt like shaking Lee and telling him, 'The whole of Earls Court are celebrating your song because they've gone to see a band that are really what you're about.' But he wouldn't talk about it."

Mavers was making plans. In the summer of 1996, possibly following rehab, he had slipped into The Arch at Kew, a recording studio owned by former Damned drummer Rat Scabies. He loaned Mavericks the keys when he went on holiday, and when he came back Mavericks was still there. "He was just gushing music," says Scabies. "He was really astute about what he was doing. I was surprised how experimental he wanted to be."

Mavers initially worked alone but was later joined by musicians including his brother Neil — once the La's drummer — and a Liverpoolian bassist called Edgar Summertime, formerly of the Stairs. Mavericks would kick a football around in the street before picking up his guitar. According to Scabies, he looked lean and was in wonderful form. "As far as I was aware his drug problems were no more." And the music? "Absolutely brilliant."

The sessions ended because damp in the studio was affecting Mavericks' voice, but back in Liverpool he and Summertime continued to chase the

Young sound rebel ... Lee Mavericks fronting the La's

PHOTO: DEREK RODGERS/LONDON FEATURES

perfect, raw sound at rehearsal rooms in Fawcett Square. "I'd say there was at least three LPs' worth of songs, and they were unbelievable," Summertime says. "We got a great Beethoven-y sound, but it was raw, riddled with feedback. It couldn't go out on a modern label."

After more than a year, Mavericks stopped working with Summertime and the sessions collapsed. Now Mavericks lives quietly in Huxton, near Liverpool, with his wife and four children. He's occasionally sighted around town. Sometimes he watches bands at the Fickett, where the La's often played, even joining in onstage. Following the collapse of Go! Discs, Mavericks' record contract has passed to John Kennedy of Polygram, who has visited him to no avail. Mavericks will play his music in front of anybody, but refuses to record it. The Fickett's Phil Hayes says, tantalisingly: "He's got this song called *The Human Race*, and it's the best thing he's ever written. Better than *There She Goes*."

As Mavericks is no doubt painfully aware, to commit something new to vinyl risks damaging the myth, and equally would return him to the predicament that nearly destroyed him. But if the music is that good, Mavericks could topple his spiritual offspring, Oasis, from the pinnacle of pop. "I'd book him here tomorrow because I always found him a smashing guy," says Jackson at Hull Adelphi. "He is a genius."

"Lee's happy now," insists Hayes. "It's like Van Gogh in his studio. He's not at all concerned with commerciality, or sales. He's just there making this wonderful music that no one ever hears."

The La's is available on CD through Polygram. The bootleg, *Callin' All*, features many of Mavericks' original demos.

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GETS YOU CLOSER QUICKER.

Ofili's Turner prize is a small victory for all black people, argues **Raekha Prasad** An exciting splash of colour

At last, the papers sighed last week, a painter wins the Turner prize. Conceptual art's 13-year hold on the £20,000 prize has been broken. "It's great about Ofili, isn't it," said the friend I met the morning after the announcement. But his glee was about the breaking of a much longer-held tradition. This young man is black — and most black people opening the papers or switching on the television would have been struck by Ofili's race first and his medium second.

It's not difficult to see why. Contemporary art galleries in Britain do not attract a large black audience. Visual art is still more clubby than contemporary music or even theatre. The Tate and the National Portrait Gallery show work by black artists, but permanent displays are largely of European and western art. Most black artists are shown in tempo-

rally exhibitions — here, but not forever and always.

Ofili, Mr Anomaly, is aware of the risk of being pigeon-holed as a black artist, as if his race can be separated from his experience and therefore his work. "I don't think Chris wants to class himself as a black artist, as if that's all he is," says Clare Rowe at Victoria Miro, the gallery representing Ofili.

Ofili says: "I'm black and it's a very important part of what I am. I'm not embarrassed about it. I try to bring all that I am to my work and all that I experience. That includes how people react to the way I am — the prejudice and the celebrations. I now know I didn't win the Turner prize only for me. I just hope that when black people look at me they don't see someone superhuman. They see themselves."

The desire to see ourselves dictates the books we choose to read,

films we see and plays we watch. Although art can touch people irrespective of race, the excitement at seeing someone who looks like you making art, and featured in it, is still a novelty for black people in Britain.

It was not until I went to see a British Asian theatre group that I realised how little I'd previously laughed at comedy. My sister and I had a private joke-world based on people's reaction to us as Asian girls in this country. Suddenly, it dawned on me that everyone else in the theatre had, too. We shook and rocked together.

A survey carried out by the ICA during the exhibition of black artists, *Mirage*, in 1995 showed a significant increase in the number of black visitors. "Black people are not going to the theatre to appear cultivated," says Lee Pinkerton, arts editor of the *Voice*. "It has to

appeal. And it's the same with visual art — people will go when it's relevant. White people see themselves all the time. We want to see ourselves."

But it is more than simply wanting art to mirror ourselves. It's about going to a gallery with the word "National" in front of it and wondering who's nation they're talking about. "The issue is not about blackness, but Britishness," says Gilane Tawadros, director of the Institute of International Visual Art. "National institutions are mirrors of national values. The National Gallery and the Tate don't reflect Britain as it is."

Even so, nothing could wipe the grin from my friend's face. The recognition of this one artist was a recognition of him too. Now when he visits the Tate it is as if he hears a gentle whisper: "You exist."

Members: Led, headed and wings 2 out, one page. 2nd of A, bin 81 bid Sandstone at Stratford 30 2d nap, Gd. Fine
Prominent, ran on one page from 2 out, 3rd, bin 51 bid Memory Bed at Junction 30 11 nap nap, Gd. with Barn Hill
grass 20d pulled hard, ridges 3 out, soon weakened. Fin of 13, bin 29d, Mistle Field up, heading 3 out, led 2 out, ran on
west by 11 from Pickett April at Colchester. 2nd nap nap, Gd. Splice and Spine Prominent, led after 4d until 3 out,
weakened 2 out, 3rd of 13, bin 29d bid 11 cleavage across at Windsor 20 4d nap nap, Gd. and 10d nap nap, Gd.
up.

Westwood looks like a million dollars

Change is for the good but still not for the best

Faldo sneaks up on blind side

Norman epic as Sweden strike first

If his Lordship wants bigger crowds, build hypermarkets

West Indies surprised by Border raid

winning one grand prix and coming sixth in this year's World Championship. That is

Beckham's huge wage cut

winning one grand prix and coming sixth in this year's World Championship. That is

Bocanem, £2.25 million; 8, Johnny Herbert, £2 million; 9, Ryan Giggs, £1.8 million, 10—Film Henmen, Greg Rusedski, £1.55 million.

1

Rugby Union

International: England v South Africa at Twickenham

Day of reckoning for wayward Woodward

Robert Armstrong on England's attempt to halt the Springboks and its importance for the coach

PROBABLY no England coach has been more popular or accessible among players and media alike than Clive Woodward. Yet, as his squad while away the uneasy hours before today's international against South Africa, Woodward must be aware that his professional competence and credibility are on the line.

Another defeat by one of the game's super powers, no matter how honourable, will underline the coach's consistent inability to advance England's cause on the world stage in his 15 months in the job.

It is true England have played their part in some exciting Tests and offered some promising glimpses of better times, particularly in the 26-26 draw with New Zealand a year ago, but so far there is a disturbing lack of substance to their play that does not augur well for next year's World Cup.

In his 15 Tests as coach, Woodward has often given the impression that he is merely muddling through with no clear strategy in mind: little wonder England's five wins have all come at the expense of weaker nations in their European backyard.

It is a truism that players not coaches win matches, especially in the Test arena where individual errors are magnified and punished with crushing finality. However, sometimes their coaching point at which the coaches — Woodward has four assistants — can actively inhibit the prospects of winning. England, for whom analysis has come to mean paralysis, have drifted perilously close to the stage where their coaching looks counter-productive.

Given that Woodward is backed up by top coaches such as John Mitchell and Brian Ashton, with firm ideas of their own, why single the head honcho out for comment? The short answer is that Woodward has the most important task of all — he picks the team. Naturally his assistants make detailed input — the manager Roger Utley is also involved — but the England coach has the

final say even in areas where he has limited knowledge, such as the front row.

Woodward has chopped and reshuffled every part of the team with unrelenting enthusiasm, making five changes for last week's Test against Australia, three for today's game and myriad others in his first 10 months as coach.

Altogether he has capped more than 50 players, including 17 who made their debut on last summer's ill-fated tour to the southern hemisphere when 18 senior players were unavailable. After defeats that verged on debacles Woodward has now chosen to rely on three newcomers plus 12 players who won caps under his predecessor Jack Rowell.

It is fair to say that some of Woodward's decisions have helped deny England a win

Some of Woodward's more crass decisions have undoubtedly helped to deny England a Test win. In his first match against Australia he insisted on putting two new caps in the front row, the kind of folly that meant his team were fortunate to escape with a 15-15 draw. Today the familiar pattern of taking unnecessary risks is once again evident. Den Luger is picked on the wing ahead of the tried and tested David Rees, who remains on the bench, while Matt Dawson is given the specialist's role of goalkicker largely because Mike Catt missed an important conversion last Saturday.

Dubbed Clive Woodward by the former England coach Dick Best, Woodward's nickname sums up the mixed feelings of exasperation, frustration and wry amusement elicited by many of his pronouncements and Test selections. His notorious maxim

that "positions don't matter" has been Woodward's justification for picking a scrum-half (Austin Healey) on the wing, an open-side flanker (Richard Hill) at No. 8, a fly-half (Josh Lewsey) at centre and a No. 3 (Tim Rodber) in the second row.

To start with, Woodward made the fundamental error of picking players solely on the basis of their club form — the Bath hooker Andy Long was a prime example — yet this autumn he has veered strongly towards men of proven reputation, hence the recall of Rodber, Phil de Glanville and Tony Underwood all within the past 10 days. Unfortunately England have paid a heavy price, simply marking time while their coach has indulged the luxury of making his misjudgments in public. Two weeks ago his team came close to defeat by Italy.

If anyone has doubts about the massive impact a coach can make on his squad, they ought to study the example of South Africa, who have progressed from the slippers to the sublime in 17 months. Since Nick Mallett replaced Carol du Plessis, the Springboks have strung together 17 Test wins, matching the All Blacks record of nearly 30 years ago. A victory at Twickenham must surely confirm Mallett's men as the greatest team the game has seen.

According to Gary Teichmann, the Springboks captain, the role of their coach has been all-important. "It all starts at the top," he declared. "The coach has a huge effect — he has to put a lot of belief and confidence into his players, as well as providing them with the way of playing that we want. We've had our fair share of coaches in South Africa and we can say that the coach is the key to any successful team."

Whether England, having lost to the Wallabies by a single point, can find the cutting edge Woodward has been trying to develop at this week's squad's sessions at Rokehampton must be open to doubt. After all, the back three of Luger, Underwood and Nick Beal are a new unit, untried at this level, while Dawson is more accustomed to playing with his Northampton half-back partner Paul Grayson than with the volatile Catt.

All the portents point strongly to another South African win. Even so, it would be foolish to dismiss a well-organised England team, who by nature tend to relish a back-to-back scenario. As a coach Woodward may have the same dogmatic relationship to Test rugby that Barman does to astral physics but, like the Joker, he may yet have a good laugh at everyone else's expense.

REPLACEMENTS: ENGLAND: 15. Phil de Glanville (Leicester), 14. Richard Hill (Leicester), 13. Josh Lewsey (Leicester), 12. Matt Dawson (Leicester), 11. David Rees (Leicester), 10. Nick Beal (Leicester), 9. Tony Underwood (Leicester), 8. Austin Healey (Leicester), 7. Andy Long (Leicester), 6. Mike Catt (Leicester), 5. Phil de Glanville (Leicester), 4. Richard Hill (Leicester), 3. Josh Lewsey (Leicester), 2. Matt Dawson (Leicester), 1. David Rees (Leicester).

South Africa: 15. Nick Mallett (Leicester), 14. Phil de Glanville (Leicester), 13. Josh Lewsey (Leicester), 12. Matt Dawson (Leicester), 11. David Rees (Leicester), 10. Nick Beal (Leicester), 9. Tony Underwood (Leicester), 8. Austin Healey (Leicester), 7. Andy Long (Leicester), 6. Mike Catt (Leicester), 5. Phil de Glanville (Leicester), 4. Richard Hill (Leicester), 3. Josh Lewsey (Leicester), 2. Matt Dawson (Leicester), 1. David Rees (Leicester).

may yet re-enter the equation and the former Scotland and Lions captain Finlay Calder predicts both his fellow former internationals will be back before Christmas. "They forced the issue. If they can go back in, they'll take in the people and structure they want, because they've got to respect the issue. There's nobody in there at the moment. The game was haphazard and there's a bit more cleaning out to do. But there are a lot of good people in the game prepared to help now where they wouldn't have lifted a finger to bring credibility to the previous structure."

Among those central to the healing process will be the SRU president Derek Brown who, as a funeral director, might be said to possess all the requisite skills for the



Pass time... Tim Rodber in the thick of the action during last Saturday's 12-11 defeat by Australia at Twickenham

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

New locksmith and a key player

Robert Kitson on the versatile Tim Rodber, who has been successfully converted to England's engine room

IT cannot be long before Jeremy Clarkson is wheeled in to assess English rugby. All this talk of stepping up a gear, reacting to conditions and cutting straight lines through the traffic. This afternoon Clive Woodward will just settle for something reliable to get him from A to B, or *Vorsprung durch Technik* as they say in Bloemfontein.

In Tim Rodber England have long had an impressively assembled off-roader, a man for all terrains, whether dressed in his army or rugby kit. He even drives a Range Rover. No surprise, then, that when Woodward needed a lock to manoeuvre him out of a corner last month he chose to customise a proven model, sitting idly out the back.

Rodber as a second-row is less of an issue, in an era when coaches knowingly refer to a back four rather than a front five, than why he has not played more. Last Saturday was only the fourth time an England team containing the Northampton captain had lost at Twickenham since his debut almost seven years ago. All but one reverse has been by less than three points. Yet despite 35 caps and a fine Lions pedigree,

Rodber remains on trial, required to switch position to get back into the fold.

In the fullness, when we know for sure if Mike Catt is English rugby's Greene Hick, we will draw parallels between Rodber and Angus Fraser and ask whether their value was only appreciated in absence. What you are unlikely to hear from Fraser, or any other active international,

"He just dropped me to my knees. Told me I thought I was better than I was. I went back to Jan McGeehan at Northampton and, in his totally different way, he said much the same. It was the perfect good-cop bad-cop scenario because they were both talking to each other."

"In the end I realised they were right. From there I had a year in 1996-97 when, for the

first time, I played consistently from pre-Christmas through to the Lions.

Whether you're playing international sport or you're chief executive of a multinational, the sun shines out of you're own opinion. Ultimately, though, it doesn't."

Injuries ruined last season but, mentally, he now feels far more consistent. "I know when I'm losing it in a game — when I'm walking or when people run past me — and how to kick myself back in. Now I get Johnno (Martin Johnson), for example, to shout at me if he runs past. I need people to

be honest. In the past if they wanted to criticise they didn't necessarily tell me."

Rodber remains a captain in the Green Howards infantry regiment, albeit more involved these days with recruitment and PR to facilitate his rugby. Ironically his years of sporting commitment have now scuppered any chance of active soldiering once next year's World Cup is

the costly punch which saw him sent off in Port Elizabeth in 1994. One of England's best away performances of the decade was the 32-15 win in Pretoria on that same tour.

"Has one ever seen an England team glisten in a ball game with such a shimmering and sustained diamond brightness?" purred Frank Keating in these pages. "Rodber and his forwards were quite stupendous from first to last."

The new locksmith brushes it all off — "on the day it clicked" — and predicts a less glittering encounter. "Nobody has picked up on the fact Australia didn't score a try against us. The last World Cup was won on defence and that's what we're working on. For me the pleasures aren't necessarily running with the ball. It's the big tackle, winning the hit of ball you really needed to win."

What matters most of all is improving on his tackle-count against the Wallabies — "I and no others" — and making sure he is involved in the 1999 tournament. "I know it's something that will not come again unless I play well." Which, in modern rugby terminology, means staying in top gear for the long haul.

'I do sometimes regret my rugby career. There were things, like selection for the SAS, I'd like to have tried'

sportsman, is the line "my persona was probably my undoing". Like batting at the Wace, a quiet chat with Rodber can veer deep into self-examination.

Even if his 6ft 6in and slightly aloof military air camouflage the Rodber within, the 29-year-old acknowledges he took far too long to banish civilian suspicions. Only when the then England coach Jack Rowell took him aside at Marlow RFC in 1996 and fired off a stream of verbal shrapnel did the inner man poke his head above the parapet.

first time, I played consistently from pre-Christmas through to the Lions. Whether you're playing international sport or you're chief executive of a multinational, the sun shines out of you're own opinion. Ultimately, though, it doesn't."

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out of the way; sitting gloomily at home, a converted barn surrounded by six acres, earlier this year recovering from a snapped knee ligament after a wasted season of twanged hamstrings and concussion, even he questioned the wisdom of dovetailing two such demanding vocations. "I do sometimes regret my rugby career from an army point of view. I always wanted to be a soldier and there were things, like selection for the SAS, I'd like to have tried."

The South Africans need no re-introduction, not merely because of his Lions efforts or

Twickenham teams

England

15. N. Rodber (Northampton)
14. R. Hill (Leicester)
13. J. Lewsey (Leicester)
12. M. Dawson (Leicester)
11. D. Rees (Leicester)
10. N. Beal (Leicester)
9. T. Underwood (Leicester)
8. A. Healey (Leicester)
7. A. Long (Leicester)
6. M. Catt (Leicester)
5. P. de Glanville (Leicester)
4. R. Hill (Leicester)
3. J. Lewsey (Leicester)
2. M. Dawson (Leicester)
1. D. Rees (Leicester)

South Africa

15. N. Mallett (Leicester)
14. P. de Glanville (Leicester)
13. J. Lewsey (Leicester)
12. M. Dawson (Leicester)
11. D. Rees (Leicester)
10. N. Beal (Leicester)
9. T. Underwood (Leicester)
8. A. Healey (Leicester)
7. A. Long (Leicester)
6. M. Catt (Leicester)
5. P. de Glanville (Leicester)
4. R. Hill (Leicester)
3. J. Lewsey (Leicester)
2. M. Dawson (Leicester)
1. D. Rees (Leicester)

Kick-off 2.30pm. TV Live on Sky Sports 2 from 1.30pm.

World Cup qualifier: Scotland v Spain

Paterson goes as born-again Scots face a Spanish inquisition

Robert Kitson in Edinburgh on a shake-up within the SRU and rebirth of Scottish rugby

TRUST the Spanish to coincide with the biggest inquisition in Scottish rugby history. Which side needs today's concluding World Cup qualifier least is debatable but, while Spain gaze in horror at the plunging thermometer, many outside Murrayfield's corridors will feel like treating the game as a new beginning rather than a bitter end.

Last night's formal departure of Duncan Paterson as chairman of the Scottish Rugby Union's executive board has, finally, removed the chief target of the disillusionment shrouding the sport's tartan outposts. No one can be totally confident

about what the future holds but, even among the fiercest critics, a feeling exists that the worst may be over.

A two-day conference at which all concerned will be invited to get around the table is, if the clubs get their way, set to call time on the much-criticised super-district concept for starters. Depending how many of Paterson's ex-supporters dig their heels in, there is also likely to be broad agreement that a leaner professional structure is needed to help reverse the union's current deficit of £17.5 million.

The likes of Andy Irvine and John Jeffrey, who both resigned from their positions within the SRU last week,

may yet re-enter the equation and the former Scotland and Lions captain Finlay Calder predicts both his fellow former internationals will be back before Christmas.

"They forced the issue. If they can go back in, they'll take in the people and structure they want, because they've got to respect the issue. There's nobody in there at the moment. The game was haphazard and there's a bit more cleaning out to do. But there are a lot of good people in the game prepared to help now where they wouldn't have lifted a finger to bring credibility to the previous structure."

Among those central to the healing process will be the SRU president Derek Brown who, as a funeral director, might be said to possess all the requisite skills for the

role. Below him, though, remain certain mandarins for whom, to quote another former internationalist Sean O'Brien, "self-interest is still top of the agenda."

Linen is "strongly" in favour of scrapping the super-districts and suspects, in any case, there will be no Scottish involvement if or when a British league comes into being. Like all good New Zealanders, he believes the key is to be found back out on the pitch. "Amid all the smoke and once the bullets stop flying, we're getting together a pretty good team. We haven't turned the corner yet but we're coming up to it. It's not all doom and gloom."

Even Calder agrees with that assessment. Last week he issued a joint statement with two other former captains Jim Aitken and David Sole

suggesting Scottish rugby "was on the verge of tragedy" but the spirited display against the Springboks has softened his line.

"They picked a poor side against the Maoris and got treated accordingly. But I think we'll see a far closer Five Nations this year. Apart from the Kiwis, England are poor. Everywhere else, frankly, they're still at sixes and sevens."

Closer to home, no more than 6,000 tickets have been sold for Scotland's latest Heineken runabout and Calder has stern words for Jim Telfer, the Scotland coach, who has criticised his country's supporters. "Everyone recognises his strength as a forwards coach but his public relations is appalling. To roar at the public for not turning up is like the minister who

shouts 'Where are the rest of you' at the brethren. You've got to make it nice for them to come back to church again."

"These hard-core believers who do show will pay closest attention to Gregor Townsend, recovered from a tweaked hamstring to fill the full-back berth, and the latest 'battered Kiwi' Cameron Mather, qualified on residential grounds. As for Spain, already safely qualified for the World Cup after beating Portugal 21-17 on Wednesday, prayer is the best option."

REPLACEMENTS: SCOTLAND: 15. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 14. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 13. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 12. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 11. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 10. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 9. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 8. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 7. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 6. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 5. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 4. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 3. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 2. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic), 1. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic).

Murrayfield teams

Scotland

15. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
14. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
13. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
12. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
11. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
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6. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
5. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
4. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
3. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
2. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)
1. Iwan Tuk (Glasgow Celtic)

Spain

15. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
14. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
13. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
12. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
11. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
10. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
9. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
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4. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
3. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
2. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)
1. A. A. Franchini (Glasgow Celtic)

Kick-off 2.30pm. TV Live on ITV from 2.15pm.

New structure with an English bent

Robert Armstrong

ENGLAND's leading clubs are likely to take the lion's share of places in the new British League due to start next season. Ten Premiership clubs and two from Wales, including Cardiff, are set to make up one division while sides from Scotland, Ireland and Wales would dominate a parallel division which may include two English clubs. The proposed structure reflects a deep rift between

England and the Celtic nations' working party looking to settle on an ideal set-up. A British League Cup competition involving all 24 teams would also be held through the season, essentially as a sop to those unions who wish to see an all-embracing British competition.

The likes of Andy Irvine and John Jeffrey, who both resigned from their positions within the SRU last week,

may yet re-enter the equation and the former Scotland and Lions captain Finlay Calder predicts both his fellow former internationals will be back before Christmas. "They forced the issue. If they can go back in, they'll take in the people and structure they want, because they've got to respect the issue. There's nobody in there at the moment. The game was haphazard and there's a bit more cleaning out to do. But there are a lot of good people in the game prepared to help now where they wouldn't have lifted a finger to bring credibility to the previous structure."

Among those central to the healing process will be the SRU president Derek Brown who, as a funeral director, might be said to possess all the requisite skills for the

role. Below him, though, remain certain mandarins for whom, to quote another former internationalist Sean O'Brien, "self-interest is still top of the agenda."

Linen is "strongly" in favour of scrapping the super-districts and suspects, in any case, there will be no Scottish involvement if or when a British league comes into being. Like all good New Zealanders, he believes the key is to be found back out on the pitch. "Amid all the smoke and once the bullets stop flying, we're getting together a pretty good team. We haven't turned the corner yet but we're coming up to it. It's not all doom and gloom."

Solutions

WORDPLAY

Dropouts: HOODLUM

Words Without End: LOUSE

Brain Tease

a) Norway, Doorway h) gorge

Missing Link

a) boot/jack/knife

b) sweet/talk/show

c) fig/roll/bar

d) red/not/bed

e) face/pack/animal

f) jam/packed/lunch

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Neptune and Pluto.

2. Oz (said by Dorothy on

return from Wizard of).

3. Coronation of a Pope.

4. Go, Japanese board game.

5. The countries of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal.

6. Films based on Shakespeare Plays: song from West Side Story (Romeo & J.); scene of Forbidden Planet (The Tempest); song from Kiss me Kate (Fanning of the S.); based on Antony & Cleopatra.

7. His predecessor assassinated: PM Perceval; President Anwar Sadat; PM Verwoerd; President McKinley; PM

Indira Gandhi.

8. Bell, Book and Candle.

Alexander Bell (first words on telephone), Book of Common Prayer; "Out, out, brief candle," sisters' pseudonym Bell.

"The Book of Changes," Feast of Candlemas; Liberty Bell, Book of Mormon, Candle in the Wind (Elton J. song).

9. Perfect A.E. Spy (book by: perfect numbers, perfect tense; A.E. Day (song by); 10. udd, Elmer Fudd (B. Bunny says to); Opera Billy Budd (no females in); Roy Hudd (radio programme News Riddles).

Football

The FA Cup is the oldest testament to the game's appeal but Europe's greed is threatening to consume its soul

David Lacey

EARLY tomorrow evening a host of small clubs will enter the draw for the third round of the FA Cup. The excitement of children being taken into Santa's Grotto. They all know what they want and, even if only one can be drawn against Manchester United, the prospect alone is enough to make hearts skip beats.

So much of the joy and romance of the world's oldest football tournament lies in the

Imagination. Commonsense may argue against Old George eventually appearing at Old Trafford simply because they have defeated Tynes. Rovers 4-0 in the first qualifying round, watched by a crowd of 15, but FA Cup football is infectious and writes its own scripts.

No other competition so consistently links the grass roots of the game with its wealthiest and most gifted performers. Even without the accompanying champagne, last season's fourth-round tie between Stevenage Borough and Newcastle United would have still held the nation in thrall. The 1-1 draw at Stevenage was a classic of its kind and St James' Park had a full house when Newcastle narrowly won the replay.

Such dramas are the life-

blood of the FA Cup but they are now under threat from a predictable source — Europe. If proposals for an extended Champions League and a new 131-club UEFA Cup are approved when UEFA delegates meet in Jerusalem on Thursday the Football Association will be faced with having to trim the FA Cup in order to fit it into an even more crowded fixture list, and one way of doing this would be to abolish replays.

Consider the FA's problem. After this season, if UEFA's plan goes ahead, an English team reaching the final of the Champions League would play 17 matches on top of their 36-game Premiership programme plus domestic cup ties. Reaching the final of the UEFA Cup would add another 15 fixtures and scrapping the

Cup Winners' Cup will barely ease the congestion. UEFA has rejected the FA's plea for the enlarged European competitions to be put back a season, which means that between the end of February and mid-April in 2000 there will probably be no mid-weeks available for Cup replays. Every Tuesday and Wednesday will be spoken for either by European ties or by internationals.

Something will have to give and, as Colin Hutchinson, Chelsea's managing director, pointed out only last weekend, the FA Cup is the obvious candidate. "Top English clubs could be facing 60-plus fixtures a season," Hutchinson predicted in the club programme. "The FA Cup will not escape any fixture purge. Multiple replays got kicked

into touch and the next casualty will be the one-off replay. It cannot be long before FA Cup ties become single matches, result on the day, with extra-time and penalties if needed."

It is hard to argue with Hutchinson's logic. In fact the status of the Cup has been under threat ever since the FA decided that it should go to penalties after one replay, leaving the great sagas of the past to the memory.

As it is, this season's final will be decided by a shoot-out if two hours of football fail to produce a winner. Hemmed in by the European finals, and with England playing two crucial European Championship qualifiers soon afterwards, the FA Cup final will no longer have the opportunity to escape any fixture purge. Multiple replays got kicked

saw Tottenham's Ricky Villa dribble through the Manchester City defence to win the trophy in 1981. Had the original match, a scrappy draw, been settled by shoot-out it would hardly have been the same.

When a team wins the FA Cup without actually winning the final in open play something precious will have been lost for ever. Five years ago only a header by Arsenal's Andy Linighan in the last minute of extra-time spared their replay with Sheffield Wednesday an ordeal by penalties. Take away the replay and the prospect becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

According to Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, there is a general reluctance at Lancaster Gate to do away with replays before the final. But even if a way could be found of

fitting them into future fixture lists, there is no guarantee that clubs perennially involved in Europe would treat the FA Cup as a priority.

How long will it be before the fortunes to be made in Europe reduce the Cup to the selling-plate status of the Worthington Cup, where it is now common for the big clubs to field teams heavily laced with reserves? Last season witnessed a disturbing trend when Middlesbrough, worried about fixture congestion, played a couple of raw youngsters in a fourth-round tie at home to Arsenal, and Manchester United, a week away from a Champions League quarter-final against Monaco, lost at Barnsley in a fifth-round replay at Old Trafford after fielding a team which included Ben Thornley, Erik

Neve and Michael Clegg. Given the choice between the rich gravy of an FA Cup replay and the lukewarm consolation of a routine Champions League fixture, the English football follower would surely opt for the former every time. True, Manchester United versus Bayern Munich at Old Trafford on Wednesday will decide one of the most intriguing groups the tournament has seen so far but stretching the thing out over three qualifying rounds and two group phases before the quarter-finals is bound to test the public's appetite.

Next Thursday promises to be European football's new Jerusalem. But the FA Cup remains the oldest testament to the game's appeal and should not have to lose its soul to the greed of the big players.

The fall guys of sexy football

A theatre impresario hopes to become chairman of Everton. Roy Collins on the dangers of the lead role

THE idea of becoming a football club chairman has so obsessed every Tom, Dick and Mr Harry of the retail and commercial world in recent years that one suspects most businessmen's favourite pink newspaper is neither the Financial Times nor the Evening Standard but the Football Club Chairman's Yearbook.

The theatre impresario Bill Kenwright is again casting a covetous eye, in his case through rose-tinted opera glasses, at a football club, launching a consortium bid of more than £50 million to take over Everton, where he is deputy chairman. Given football's new kudos as sexy and entertaining, it was only a matter of time before a hunky auditioned for the role of leading man.

Sir Richard Attenborough was once a Chelsea director, but with no intention of trying

came into Wimbledon 21 years ago they had just joined the league and it was all about football and fun. Now I spend most of my day dealing with business and legal matters."

The stereotype of the mill-owning chairman, seen only on match days and then just to preen himself in the press, is long gone. These days the boardroom door is open to anyone who wants to make a fast buck or has already done so. But, with plc directors to answer to, it has become a full-time job.

Alan Sugar, having made his fortune from cheap, easy-to-assemble computers, bought Tottenham seemingly believing the same principles could be just as successful in football. Now, with his son Daniel playing an increasingly important role in the day-to-day running of the club, Spurs has become the family business.

The late Matthew Harding, the epitome of new money, having made his pile in the shadowy world of re-insurance, might well have succeeded in buying his way into the position of Chelsea chairman had it not been for the fact that, while no player is bigger than the club, Ken Bates is.

Francis Lee, the former Manchester City and England player, could not resist gambling his money on a Maine Road takeover and an attempt to make himself everlastingly famous by restoring the glory days. When he failed he suffered the same vicious personal abuse which forced out his predecessor Peter Swales.

Martin Edwards inherited Manchester United, the Orient Express of family train sets, from his father Louis and says: "I have had 20 years of abuse since taking over."

Most recently he has been abused for agreeing to sell the club to Sky for £225 million.

The bottom line in football these days is the bottom line, which is why the directors forcing managers to sell players to balance the books, as in the cases of Everton and West Ham recently, have become such targets for the fans.

Only the obscenely rich, like Blackburn's Jack Walker and Wolves' Sir Jack Hayward, can afford to indulge the dreams of rich, old men. And the latter's £42 million investment has not even secured a Premiership place. Kenwright, 53, in risking his fortune to pursue a middle-aged man's dream, could quickly find himself losing the plot as badly as the current owner, Peter Johnson. Given the nature of his day job, he ought to know better.

'Football can be a cruel lover. You shouldn't spend money because you are in love'

to wield the power that goes with the title in the cinema. Kenwright, a former Coronation Street actor who peddles fantasy into the reality of the stage, said football is a different thing and it can be a cruel lover. You shouldn't spend money in football because you are in love and I have told him that. If he goes into this, it should be with his feet on the ground.

"Bill is logical when it comes to the theatre but, when he talks about Everton, it is as though he is on drugs. He loves Everton but football is not fun any more. When I

1993 Johnson, a one-time Liverpool season ticket holder, owner of Transerra and a man who made his fortune selling Christmas hampers, buys a 68 per cent stake in Everton for £10 million, replaces Dr David Marsh as chairman and promises to make them "a force" again. They avoid relegation on the last day of the season.

1994-95 Johnson sacks manager Mike Walker after the club pick up eight points from their first 14 matches. Brings in Joe Royle from Oldham, who leads Everton to safety and an unlikely FA Cup final victory over Manchester United.

1995 During the summer Johnson and Royle pull off a major coup by signing Andrei Kan-



The rise and fall of Peter Johnson

chelski from Manchester United. Everton finish 18th. 1996 Royle breaks the club transfer record to sign Nick Barmby from Middlesbrough for £5.75 million.

1997 Kanchevski is sold in February, to Fiorentina for £8 million, but a month later Royle is denied the chance to sign Barry Horne and two Norwegians, one of them Tore Andre Flo. He resigns in protest. Johnson places Dave Watson in temporary charge but the promised "world-class manager" never materialises, with Johnson's choice Bobby Robson staying at Barcelona and Andy Gray happy at Sky. In late June Johnson appoints Howard Kendall for his third spell at Goodison.

1998 Everton stay up on goal difference. Kendall's reign ends in June. Walter Smith moves from Rangers to become the fourth Everton manager in four years.

November 25: Johnson comes under fire for selling the club hero and captain Duncan Ferguson to Newcastle United for £8 million without Smith's knowledge. He resigns as chairman the following week, claiming ill health and inconvenience following his move to Jersey, and invites offers for his stake — at a price of over £50 million.

The theatre impresario and lifelong Evertonian Bill Kenwright, whom Johnson just pipped to the post five years ago, declares his interest.

Newcastle completed a league double last time Middlesbrough were in the Premiership but now Robson's side are seventh, four places higher. Their continued presence in the upper reaches proves that their positive start after promotion was no fluke, and Ron Gullit is aware of the dangers as he contemplates his first Tyne-Tees derby.

"Derbies are always special. I've played in a couple of them in Milan and it's always a special atmosphere," said Newcastle's manager. "For me I suppose it's just another game but for the local people it's something special. It's about winning and surviving and being king of the region."

Robson added: "I used to hate Sunderland and I wasn't keen on Middlesbrough. But that was part of being a Newcastle fan. Twenty years away changes the way you think. Now I want all three big north-east clubs to do well — as long as we're on top."



Kidd lures McClair to Ewood Park

Daniel Taylor

BRIAN McCLAIR will be named as Brian Kidd's assistant at Blackburn Rovers early next week.

Kidd has wasted no time in sounding out the former Manchester United striker about becoming his No. 2. And McClair, who spent 11 years at Old Trafford, will travel to Ewood Park on Monday to hammer out details of a lucrative three-year deal.

Kidd will take direct control of team affairs immediately after Blackburn's match against Charlton today. During his initial talks with Jack Walker, the club's owner, Kidd made it clear he wanted to forge a managerial partnership with McClair. The 34-year-old McClair left United in the summer to become the player-coach of Motherwell but has indicated he is ready to link up with Kidd.

Now the move depends only on the former Scotland international's demands. But, with Walker's funds, that should not be a major stumbling-block. And, harrising any last-minute hitches, McClair should be in place before Blackburn's home game against Newcastle next Saturday. The pair have remained close friends since their days at Old Trafford and speak most days about footballing matters.

Initially McClair had emerged among the favourites to replace Kidd as Ferguson's No. 2. Ferguson is a staunch admirer of the player, who played a major

part in United's rejuvenation as the premier force in English football during the late Eighties and early Nineties.

Despite the move Blackburn have assured the caretaker-manager Tony Parkes that he will keep his coaching position after 28 years which include four spells in temporary charge. Parkes will still be in control of team affairs today.

The Premiership leaders Aston Villa will face a bill for £200,000 after their teenage defender Gareth Barry plays against United at Villa Park this afternoon.

The match will mark Barry's 20th appearance in the Villa first team and earn Third Division Brighton another much-needed cheque from Villa as part of the compensation agreement for the 17-year-old that was drawn up by a Football League appeals committee in October.

Barry, who joined Villa as a trainee from Brighton, has appeared in 17 games this season. Villa have already paid Brighton an initial £150,000 plus £25,000 after Barry made his England Under-21 debut last month. A further £200,000 is due after 20 senior appearances. Villa will have to pay another £200,000 after 40 appearances.

The Jamaican World Cup striker Dean Burton has joined Barnsley from Derby County on a month's loan and is likely to play at Watford today as the manager John Hendrie is without all four of his strikers, and Jan-Aage Fjortoft was sold to Eintracht Frankfurt last week.

Asian delegates unhappy as Fifa removes World Cup spot

DESPITE the 2002 World Cup being held in Japan and South Korea, the Asian nations have been left with one fewer qualifying spot after Fifa's executive committee yesterday allocated the 32 places.

Fifa decided that Asia should have four nations in the finals, including the two already qualified. "The representatives of Asia were not too happy," the Fifa president Sepp Blatter told reporters. But he added, Asia effectively has more slots than in 1998, when it qualified three nations, with Iran picking up a fourth slot in a play-off against Australia, the top qualifier from Oceania.

For the next World Cup the leading contender from Oceania faces a two-leg play-off

against a South American team. That decision followed a draw between Europe and South America, the only two regions prepared to take part in the play-off.

Europe retains 14 places in the 2002 World Cup, with an additional slot for the reigning champion France. The French automatically qualified this year as hosts.

Africa and Concacaf — covering North and Central America and the Caribbean — will keep the five and three places they respectively held this year.

South America has four qualifying places in addition to the slot it must fight for with Oceania. This year it had four qualifiers in addition to the reigning champion Brazil.

Shearer happier about future

continued from page 24

season?" "I would sincerely hope so. When my contract runs out I will only be 31."

"That's my plan anyway. I wouldn't like to go down the leagues — no disrespect — because I've always played my football at the top, that's all I've known."

But as a prospective manager, would it not be better to experience some lower division football? "I don't know. Time will dictate that. It will all roll out once I have finished playing. At what age that will be I don't know, where that will be I don't know. I sincerely hope it is here, I want it to be here."

Smiling, he emphasised "want". And after that? "Time will dictate whether I should or shouldn't go into management but it interests me."

"It doesn't interest me now and it didn't interest me at 25 or 26 when I was offered the job at Blackburn, so two or three years later... playing is hard enough. I don't see a problem in player-management when you're 32 or 33

and you're looking to bow out but, when you're at your peak, I don't see it's right."

Having turned 28 only in August, Shearer is definitely at his peak. It is just that Newcastle are not, although in the past seven days there has been a discernible improvement in the atmosphere around the club.

It is as if during the radiantly bad display at Everton the club bottomed out, could get no worse. Then Duncan Ferguson arrived, scored two against Wimbledon on his debut at St James' Park last Saturday and on Wednesday

all the players went paint-balling.

It was Gullit's idea and it worked. For the first time in months the Newcastle squad was unified, so much so that Shearer said: "This football club, when compared to last week, is completely different. It could be different again next week but let's hope it continues to go like this because there has been a buzz about the place and everyone seems to be lifted."

"It's amazing what one who does. Duncan has come in and made a tremendous start, the confidence and belief are

flowing again. The next few games are important for us but, if we beat Middlesbrough tomorrow, though Shearer himself may not be fit and then Blackburn and Leicester, our season would be set up nicely. I don't see why we can't have a good run in the Cup and qualify for Europe. That would be success."

Gullit, said Shearer, deserves credit for the growing optimism. "He has brought a belief, a confidence. There is an aura around him and I think now we will be tougher to beat. That isn't to say we weren't under Kenny. Ron has brought his continental ideas into coaching and the lads have been very impressed. They are good and we have a laugh, which is important."

Revival is not a word Shearer used but he nodded in its direction and, though it feels premature to say so, a win at Middlesbrough would confirm that, with the status of their No. 9 sorted at last, the smile might just be returning to Newcastle United and Alan Shearer.

Gascoigne in devilish mood for Gullit's first Tyne-Tees derby

PAUL GASCOIGNE's knee injury has been cleared by Middlesbrough to face one of his former club's, Newcastle, in tomorrow's north-east derby at the Riverside Stadium.

"It will be a special day for Paul but we can't let any one player's situation be bigger than the game itself," said Boro's manager Bryan Robson. "This is an important game. We have gone unbeaten for two months in the league and you don't want to have that record taken away by your closest rivals."

"People will be watching Gazza, of course, but I hope they will be watching him for the brilliant game he is playing. He was a doubtful starter at the beginning of the week but he has proved his fitness every day in training since then."

"I know he's been about this game. Mind you, Paul normally buzzes about every game. I fully expect him to be running about like a Tasmanian devil."

Newcastle completed a league double last time Middlesbrough were in the Premiership but now Robson's side are seventh, four places higher. Their continued presence in the upper reaches proves that their positive start after promotion was no fluke, and Ron Gullit is aware of the dangers as he contemplates his first Tyne-Tees derby.

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Performance of the week



Michael Hughes (Wimbledon) whose influence in midfield did much to end Chelsea's hold on the League Cup and take his team to the semi-finals

AN Other

This footballer's uncle had taken a similar route from the land of his fathers but ended up some three miles down the road from where the latter found glory. A goalkeeping winger of considerable pace, he spent five years among some long necks before becoming established among birds of a rather different feather. Here he scored 134 times in 314 league appearances, scoring twin peaks in one famous season. Later he moved to a smaller house where the river bends.

Last week: **Alan Wood** Manchester City, Shrewsbury, Millwall, Hull, Middlesbrough, Walsall

weekendsport

Saturday December 5 1998 www.footballunlimited.co.uk

England's captain opens up on the eve of a north-east derby



Thinking ahead... Alan Shearer looks beyond a turbulent start to the season, with two cup exits and one manager's, and says he wants to see out his playing days at St James' Park

Shearer not for moving

In a searching interview with Michael Walker, the Newcastle striker says he is staying with the club

HERE is one question and only one question that troubles the mind of a man on his way to interview Alan Shearer: "Why am I doing this?" Shearer has been interviewed so many times, been asked the same questions so many times, given non-committal responses so many times, that trying to get beyond the public curtain even he calls

"Shearer-speak" is like trying to knock him off the ball. A journey to meet Shearer does not fly by optimistically therefore, and on the bright morning of Wednesday August 26 in particular, any hopes of an insight into his thoughts appeared futile indeed. At about 9am that morning Kenny Dalglish was sacked — sorry, let go — by Newcastle United and, as the press gathered outside the

gates of Durham County Cricket Ground where Newcastle train, the prior arrangement with Shearer seemed about as likely to happen as Round Gullit becoming the new manager.

Yet both did. Gullit arrived within 48 hours and Shearer agreed to proceed with the interview. It has taken 14 weeks for the latter to be completed but that is no fault of Shearer's. In that time he has seen Dalglish replaced by Gullit, Newcastle exit the Cup Winners' Cup and the League Cup and slip down the Premiership. There have also been two underwhelming England matches against Sweden and Bulgaria. Then there has been the constant speculation about his future.

One soon learns from talking to Shearer that speculation and hypothetical propositions are his least favourite things in football. On that August morning, when it seemed timely to inquire if he fancied the vacancy, given his expressed desire to go into management, but the answer was a nervous laugh followed by terse diplomacy: "I don't know what's going on here today, so I'm not going to say anything."

However, in a broader discussion about the state of the game Shearer was interested and interesting. He thinks the proposed European Super League is "wrong" and "for the sake of money" and held up Wimbledon as the example to aspire to, not AC Milan. Revealing a previously well-

hidden Corinthian spirit, Shearer talked of Wimbledon's "romance" and in a further unexpected use of language a month later he spoke of Newcastle's plight being "not the dream sold to me by Kevin Keegan".

For a man who left school with one qualification, a Grade 1 English Oral CSE, perhaps a circumspect use of English should have been expected and on Thursday, as

part two of the interview developed, the subject of Shearer's vocabulary arose. Inevitably the conversation had turned to his future. Last Sunday Shearer once again stated his intention of staying at Newcastle despite all the newspaper stories to the contrary. It was, as he said in exasperated tones, "the third time I've had to put that out. What more do I have to do? I said it in August when Kenny

was still here, I said it in September when Round first came, now I've said it again. Hopefully now I've put all that to bed."

Well, yes and no. One emotion conspicuously absent from all of these statements has been Shearer's desire to stay. He has not actually said that he wants to. "Is there a difference between saying 'I am staying' and 'I want to stay'?" he asked. Yes. "Well, that's your opinion. I said I was staying at the club, I don't see why saying 'I want to stay' makes any difference."

Well, it might be a sign of commitment. Besides, did he not understand the speculation was logical because it is obvious that the greatest striker of his generation is looking worryingly unfulfilled?

"The club is unfulfilled, not just me," he said, "and I'm part of this club. It might have been logical but all I can do is come out and say 'look, I'm staying' and, if that doesn't kill off the rumours, then..."

As he wearily acknowledged, it will probably not although the conversation, having moved from the immediate future to the longer term and management, Shearer said: "My plan is to continue playing at the highest level for as long as I can." And would that entail another playing contract at Newcastle United (the present one expires at the end of next turn to page 23, column 1

Saint of St James			
Shearer's Premiership record with Newcastle			
	97/98	97/98	98/99
Minutes played	2,850	1,397	1,125
Goals	25	2	6
Goal attempts	102	16	21
On target	40	21	14
Off target	62	41	7
Passes	1,115	533	445
Goal assists	5	1	1
Success rate	67%	67%	64%
Crossing	85	32	12
Cross attempts	24%	41%	42%
Success rate	24%	41%	42%
Discipline			
Fouls committed	72	21	23
Offsides	47	25	10
Yellow cards	15	2	2
Red cards	1	0	0

Scottish Preview

Advocaat gets team in order

Patrick Glenn

IN THE matter of beating complacent players over the head, the Rangers coach Dick Advocaat has found a novel replacement for the traditional big stick. The little Dutchman uses his team's 5-1 thumping by Celtic.

With Parma looming in the second leg of their Uefa Cup tie in northern Italy on Tuesday, Advocaat yesterday likened Rangers' home match against Dunfermline this afternoon to the Old Firm confrontation two weeks ago. "I deliberately took the players aside after lunch," he said, "and made it perfectly clear that, in the list of priorities,

Dunfermline are at this moment much more important than Parma. We played Celtic just before the Italians and look what happened."

"I stressed to them the need to focus on the league match because our last result in that competition was a 5-1 beating. We can't afford to drop points in the league."

Advocaat pointed out that since the start of the season in August Rangers have already played 29 matches, and again expressed his dissatisfaction with a domestic schedule that can interfere with preparations for European ties.

"Most other countries realise that, before big European ties, they have to amend the schedule to assist their teams

as much as possible. The week before last, we started with Celtic, continued with Parma and ended with the League Cup final."

"I'm not saying this merely because it's happened to us. It could have been Celtic or Kilmarnock or Hearts. And I said it from the start, so I'm not making any excuses for any results we may have."

Advocaat will field the League Cup winning team against Dunfermline, but will have to make at least one change for the European match, as French striker Stephane Guivarch is ineligible. With the Finn Jonatan Johansson — Rangers' leading scorer in Europe with five goals — still nursing a knee

injury, the coach will be short of options in attack. The Argentine Gabriel Amato cannot find a place in the squad for league games, but will be part of the group in Parma.

Celtic's outing this weekend is delayed until tomorrow, when they face Hearts at Tynecastle. It is unlikely that head coach Jozef Venglos will include his new £3 million striker, Mark Viduka from Croatia Zagreb.

"With forwards, it's always better to allow them a week or so to settle in and get their touch and sharpness," he said. Venglos is likely to ask Liverpool to extend the loan period for goalkeeper Tony Warner, whose stay at Parkhead ends after the game.



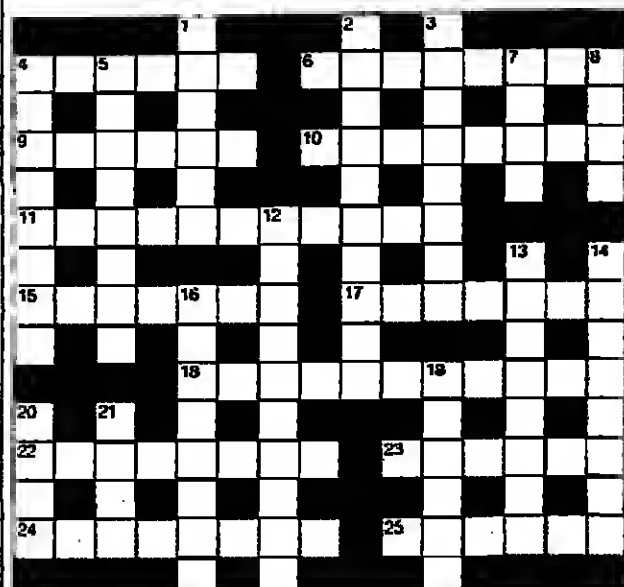
Playing the game... Gregory on the ball for Derby County before moving in to management PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CANNON

Guardian COLLINS Prize Crossword 21,450

A copy of the Collins English Dictionary will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to The Guardian Crossword, P.O. Box 6603, Birmingham, B26 3PR, or Fax to 0171 713 4735 by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday December 14.

Name

Address



Set by Araucaria

Across

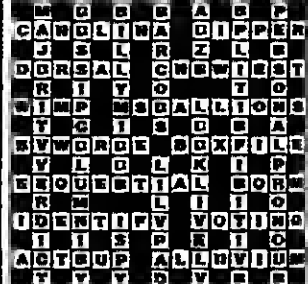
- 4 1964: Wrongful arrest — he didn't take it (5)
- 6 Elite go to prison, hence something for ponder? (5,3)
- 9 Artists, people of intelligence, and a student of a group of 26? (6)
- 10 Like contemplatives going with a letter (8)
- 11 Boys (3-8)
- 15 1963: Condition of track would shortly be included (7)
- 17 1997: Food and air required (5,2)
- 18 Standard inset for the man who slew the 11 to spoil them? (5,3,3)
- 22 15 and 3, not Tennessee in this context (9)
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